











# MORNING AND EVENING EXERCISES,

FOR

APRIL, MAY, JUNE.

BY

WILLIAM JAY.

"Thy word is everlasting truth;  
How pure is every page!  
That Holy Book shall guide our youth,  
And well support our age."

WATTS.

"The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD."

JEREMIAH.

NEW-YORK:  
ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS, 235 BROADWAY.

1854.

BV4832

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Gift

Bertram Smith

March 15, 1934

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John A. Gray,  
PRINTER AND STEREOTYPYER,  
97 Cliff, cor Frankfort.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS Advertisement is not in the nature of an apology. If the Work be good it needs none, if bad it deserves none. But it is to intimate the reasons of the Author's engaging so soon again in a similar Publication with the former.\* They were, the peculiar acceptance "The Morning Exercises for the Closet" have met with; the many testimonies of their usefulness he has received; and the various applications addressed to him by Christians and Ministers exciting him to send forth a companion to them for the Evening. He is fully aware that "the importunity of friends," so frequently urged by writers for their appearing before the Public, is a justification perhaps never sufficient, and not always *very* true—Yet it is certain, that, but for this provocative, the following reflections had never seen the light.

The Author hopes, however, that this second series of three hundred and sixty-five Exercises to aid the retired Christian "at evening-tide to meditate," will be no less approved and useful than the preceding

\* At first the Evening Exercises were published in two volumes, separate from the Morning Exercises; and two years after them.

number. He has not paid less attention to the selection and execution of the subjects—But that attention has been paid amidst the numerous engagements of an extensive charge, and, through the greatest period of the Work, also under the anxieties of the most trying domestic affliction. He has no doubt, but in seven hundred and thirty Exercises of this kind, the same thought and illustration sometimes, and perhaps nearly in the same words, may occur. But they occur in new positions and connexions; and the prevention was almost impossible. Many of his readers will perceive marks of that haste which was also inevitable: and they who are accustomed to composition themselves, will know how hard it is to write on any interesting and fertile topic, under the restraints of a great and prescribed brevity; and how unfriendly to ornament is perpetual effort at condensation. “If I have done well, and as is fitting the story, it is that which I desired: but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto.”

*Percy Place, Bath:*

*Dec. 10th, 1831.*

TO

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, Esq.

MY DEAR SIR,

I AM not certain that my motive was quite pure, when I felt a very powerful desire that, in a way of some little publicity and continuance, I might appear associated with One so esteemed and illustrious as the Man whose name dignifies this page, and at whose feet I presume to lay this Volume.

A writer of judgment and wit has somewhere said, that "there are good persons with whom it will be soon enough to be acquainted in heaven." But there are individuals with whom it is no common privilege to have been acquainted on earth.

It is now more than forty years since the Writer of this Address was indulged and honoured with your notice and friendship. During this period (so long in the brevity of human life!) he has had many opportunities of deriving great pleasure and profit from your private conversation; and also of observing, in your public career, the proofs you displayed of the Orator, the Statesman, the Advocate of enlightened Freedom, and the feeling, fearless, persevering, and successful opponent of a traffic that is "a reproach to any people." But he would be unworthy of the ministry he fills, and be ashamed of the age he has



now reached, as a professed follower of our Lord and Saviour, if he could not increasingly say, with Young,

“A CHRISTIAN is the highest style of man.”

All other greatness is, in the view of faith, seducing and dangerous; in actual enjoyment, unsatisfactory and vain; and in duration, fleeting and momentary. “The world passeth away, and the lusts thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” The expectation of the man who has his “portion in this life” is continually deteriorating: for every hour brings him nearer the loss of all his treasure; and, “as he came forth of his mother’s womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand.” But the “good hope through grace,” which animates the believer, is always approaching its realities; and therefore grows, with the lapse of time, more valuable and more lively. As it is spiritual in its quality, and heavenly in its object, it does not depend on outward things, and is not affected with the decays of nature. Like the Glastonbury thorn, fabulously planted by Joseph of Arimathæa, it blooms in the depth of winter. It “brings forth fruit in old age.” “At even-tide it is light”—“For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.”

And this, my dear Sir, you are now happily experiencing, at the close of more than “threescore years and ten.” And I hail you, not as descending towards the grave under the applause of nations, but as an heir of immortality, “looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” Attended with the thanksgiving of the truly wise and good on your

behalf, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and with an unsullied religious reputation, you are finishing a course, which you have been enabled to pursue through evil report and through good report; undeviatingly, unabatingly; forgetful of none of the claims of personal or relative godliness, amidst all the cares and engagements of a popularity peculiarly varied and extensive; neglecting, in addition to the influence of example, no means to recommend the one thing needful to others; and, even from the Press, defending the interests of practical Christianity, in a work so widely circulated, so justly admired, and so pre-eminently useful, especially among the higher classes in society.

Nor can I omit the opportunity of acknowledging, individually, the obligations I feel myself under to your zeal and wisdom, when, in the novitiate of my Ministry, your correspondence furnished me with hints of admonition, instruction, and encouragement, to which I owe much of any degree of acceptance and usefulness with which I have been favoured. Nor can I forbear also to mention another Benefactor, whose name I know is as dear to every feeling of your heart as it is to every feeling of my own—the Rev. JOHN NEWTON. With this incomparable man I was brought into an early intimacy, in consequence of his addressing me without solicitation, and when personally unknown to him, in counsels and advice the most seasonable, just as I had emerged into public life, peculiarly young, and inexperienced, and exposed. These opportune advantages, for which I would be daily thankful, recall the exclamation of Solomon, “A word fitly spoken, how good is it!” and lead me to lament that persons so seldom in this way

seek or even seize opportunities of usefulness. How often do they omit to avail themselves of the influence which God, by their rank, or wisdom, or piety, or age, has given them over others, for their good: though it is a talent for which they are responsible; and the use of which would often be as welcome in the exertion as important in the results!

The years which have passed over our acquaintance have been no ordinary ones. They have been signalized by some of the most important events that could affect other nations, or our own. I am sufficiently aware of your sentiments, and fully accord with them in thinking, that while, as men and citizens, we cannot be indifferent to the state of public affairs, but ought to be alive to the welfare of a Country that has such unexampled claims to our attachment and gratitude; yet that, as Christians, we should judge of things by a rule of our own; and esteem those the best days in which the best Cause flourishes most. Now while we have suffered much, and have had much to deplore, yet "the walls of the temple" have been rising "in troublous times," and our political gloom has been relieved by more than gleams of religious glory. Let us not ask, with some, "What is the cause that the former days were better than these?" The fact itself is, at least as to spiritual things, certainly inadmissible. Conceding that eighty or ninety years ago we had fewer taxes, and many of the articles of life were more cheaply purchasable, how much more than counterbalanced was this, by an unconverted ministry, a people perishing for lack of knowledge, a general carelessness with regard to the soul, and an entire unconcern for the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom!

At our first interview we could refer to none of the many glorious institutions which are now established. I have not space to enumerate them, nor must I yield myself to enlarge on their claims. But reluctantly to pass by others, one of these has been surpassed by nothing since the days of the Apostles: and when I refer to the importance of its design, the simplicity and wisdom of its constitution, the rapidity of its growth, the vastness of its success, the number of languages into which it has translated the Scriptures, and the immensity of copies which it has distributed; I need not say, I mean the British and Foreign Bible Society, which may God preserve uninjured, and continue to smile upon, till all shall possess the unsearchable riches of Christ! Since then, too, what an extension has there been of Evangelical doctrine in the Establishment and among the Dissenters; and, I fearlessly add, of the genuine influences of Divine grace in the hearts and lives of thousands!—Surely no unprejudiced individual can trace these things, comparatively with what preceded them, and not exclaim, “God hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.”

I rejoice, my dear Sir, that a person of your consideration is in the healthful number of those who, notwithstanding the contemptuous denial of some, and the gloomy forebodings of others, believe that real religion *has* been advancing, and *is* spreading, and *will* continue to spread, till, without any disruption of the present system, “the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”

*You* do not expect that a Country called by his Name, and in which he has such a growing multitude of fol-



lowers, will be given up of God, and the fountain from which so many streams of health and life are issuing to bless the world will be destroyed. You justly think, that the way to gain more is not to despise or disown what the Spirit of God has graciously done for us already; and that the way to improvement is not to run down and condemn every present scheme, attainment, and exertion, because they are not free from those failings, which some are too studious to discover, too delighted to expose, and too zealous to enlarge and magnify. If we are not to be weary in well-doing, we need not only exhortation, but hope, which is at once the most active, as well as the most cheerful principle. Nothing so unnerves energy and slackens diligence as despondency. Nothing is equally contagious with fear. Those who feel alarm always love to transfuse it. Awful intimations of approaching evils are not only congenial with the melancholic, but the dissatisfied; and while they distress the timid, they charm those who are given to change. It is also easy to perceive that when men have committed themselves in woful announcements, they immediately feel a kind of prophetic credit at stake, and are under a considerable temptation to welcome disasters as prognostics: for though they may professedly pray against the judgments, they know, and this is a great drawback in their fervency, that their avowed creed requires the calamities as vouchers of the wisdom and truth of their interpretations. If, to preserve his reputation from suspicion, after he had cried, Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed, Jonah himself was sad and sullen, and thought he did well to be angry even unto death, because the city, with all the men, women, children, and cattle,

was not demolished, according to his word! what may not be feared from human nature now, if exercised with similar *disappointments*?

As, owing to the mildness and justice of the laws of the paternal government under which we are privileged to live, there is now no outward persecution; and yet, as religion always requires to be tried, we must expect that "from among ourselves will men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them:" for "there must be heresies, that they which are of a contrary part may be made manifest." In such cases, many are "tossed about by every wind of doctrine," till they make "shipwreck of faith and a good conscience." Others, who are not destroyed, suffer loss, especially in the simple, affectionate, devotional frame of their spirit. If *good* men are injured, they are commonly beguiled: *they* are drawn aside by something piously specious. Any proposal, directly erroneous or sinful, would excite their alarm as well as aversion. But if the enemy comes transformed into an angel of light, they think they ought not only to receive, but welcome a heavenly visitant: if he enters with the Bible only in his hand, and claims to fix their regards to any thing on that holy ground, they feel themselves not only safe, but even following the will of God:—not considering that if, even in the Scriptures, the speculative entices us away from the practical, and the mysterious from the plain; and something, though true and good in itself, but subordinate, engrosses the time and attention which should be supremely absorbed by repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ—his aim may be answered, and "Satan get an advantage over us." Such persons, acting conscientiously, become as deter-

mined as martyrs; and, continually musing upon one chosen topic, they grow as passionate as lovers, and wonder that all others are not like-minded with them—

“The worst of madmen is a saint run mad.”

There is not only a pride in dress, and beauty, and riches, and rank, and talent; but of opinion also: a kind of mental vanity, that seeks distinction by peculiarity; and would draw notice by separateness: as that which stands alone is more observable, especially when noise is added to position. In this case the female is easily betrayed beyond some of the decorums of her sex; the younger will not submit to the elder; the hearer sits in judgment on the preacher; and he that is wise in his own conceit will be wiser than seven men that can render a reason. For

“Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.”

Mushrooms, and less saleable funguses, are ordinarily found in a certain kind of rich and rank soil. When religion, from being neglected, becomes all at once the subject of general attention, many will not only be impressed, but surprised and perplexed. The light, good in itself, may for the time be too strong for the weakness of the eye, and the suddenness of the glare may dazzle rather than enlighten. It is very possible for the Church, when roused from a state of lethargy, to be in danger from the opposite extreme. The frost of formality may be followed by the fever of enthusiasm. Whenever indeed there is a high degree of religious excitement, it cannot be wonderful, considering human ignorance, prejudice, and depravity, that there should be some visionary and strange ebullitions.



We have witnessed some of these during the years that are past; but the day in which we now are is singular for the revival (with some perhaps perfectly new pretensions) of most of the notions that were fermented into being at the time of the Commonwealth, and which were then opposed by Owen, Baxter, and others, who had more divinity in their little finger, than is to be found in the body, soul, and spirit, of many of the modern innovators and improvers, who imagine that *their* light is not only "the light of the sun, but the light of seven days!"

A review of History will shew us that, at the return of less than half a century, some have commonly risen up eager and able to determine the times and the seasons, which the father hath put into his own power, and which the *Apostles* were told it was not for *them* to know. And the same confidence has always been attended with the same success. No gain has ever followed the effects worthy the time and attention expended upon them; no addition has ever been made to the understanding of the Scriptures; no fresh data have been established from which preachers could safely argue; no practical utility has been afforded to Christians in their private walk with God. And as their documents were not capable of demonstration; as, for want of certainty, they could not become principles of conduct; and as no great impression can be long maintained on the public mind that is not based on obvious truth; the noise of the warfare after a while has always died away, and left us with the conviction that "there is no prophet among us; nor any that telleth how long."

Some prove, in their spiritual genealogy, a descent from Reuben, of whom the dying father said, "un-

stable as water, thou shalt not excel." Yet they may strike, and produce a *temporary* impression in their favour, especially in a country like this; a country proverbial for its credulity, and its more than Athenian rage for something new, whatever be the *nature* of it. In England---

("England, with all thy faults I love thee still—  
 . . . . . and I can feel  
 Thy follies too")—

in England, it has been said by a satirical, yet just observer, that "any monster will make a man." Who can question this for a moment, that has patience to mortify himself as a Briton by reflection and review? Take prodigies. Dwarfs, giants, unnatural births, deformities—the more hideous, the more repelling the spectacles, the more attractive and popular have they always been. Take empiricisms. Their name is Legion; from animal magnetism and the metallic tractors, down to the last infallible remedy for general or specific complaints; all attested and recommended by the most unexceptionable authorities, especially in high life! Take the feats which have been announced for exhibition. Whatever the promiser has engaged to perform, whether to walk upon the water, or draw himself into a bottle, what large crowds have been drawn together at the time appointed, and with no few of the better sort of people always among them! How has learning been trifled with and degraded! Two or three insulated facts, and a few doubtful or convertible appearances, have been wrought up into a SCIENCE; and some very clever men have advocated its claims to zealous belief, and contrived to puzzle the opponents they could not convince. In the article of Preaching, what

manœuvres of popularity have not been successfully tried, till there seems hardly anything left for an experimenter to employ on the folly of the multitude!

But what exemplifications, had we leisure to pursue them, should we find in the article of religious absurdity and extravagance! Has any thing been ever broached with confidence that has not gained considerable attention? Did not the effusions of a Brothers, who died where only he should have lived, in confinement for madness, secure numerous believers and admirers? Had he not defenders from the Press? Did he not obtain the notice of a very learned Senator in the House of Commons? And as to the Exeter prophetess; without any one quality to recommend her but ignorance, impudence, and blasphemy, yet did she not make a multitude of converts, not only among the canaille, but among persons of some distinction? and had she not followers and defenders even among the Clergy themselves?

All reasoning and all ridicule for the time only served to contribute to the force and obstinacy of the folly. But how just here, is the remark of an eminent female writer—"Such preposterous pretensions being obviously out of the power of human nature to accomplish, the very extravagance is believed to be supernatural. It is the impossibility which makes the assumed certainty; as the epilepsy of Mahomet confirmed his claims to inspiration." And is there nothing now going forward far exceeding in credulous wonder, arrogant pretension, and miraculous boasting, all that has gone before it in a country which, in a twofold sense, may well be called "a land of vision"?\*

\* If a person wishes to see this subject fully treated, he would do well to read a late publication, called "Modern Fanaticism Unveiled."

One way to become sceptical is, instead of remembering our Lord's words, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them," to become critical and curious in religion. A very fruitful source of error is to trample on the distinction of Moses: "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." The sciences and the arts being human inventions, and therefore not only finite, but imperfect, will allow of new discoveries; and every innovation is commonly an improvement, or by experiment it is soon rejected: but we make no scruple to say, that novelty in religion is needless, dangerous, delusive. We are to receive the kingdom of God as a little child. The design of the Gospel is to "cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

The maxim often quoted, of a very great and a very good man, who blesses and adorns our own age, and who furnishes another proof that first-rate minds are simple and free from eccentricities—"Though we are not to be wise above what is written, we should be wise up to what is written," has been made to justify more than he intended. The Apostle considers it a reproach to be "always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth:" and it is a matter of lamentation when persons, perhaps well disposed, are seized with the imagination that there is something

The work is anonymous; but the Author not only writes with great ability and spirit, but is a determined advocate for Evangelical religion, and says nothing (which is always to be dreaded in such discussions) to the disparagement of *serious* or *fervent* piety.



of importance to be yet found out in religion, instead of walking in the light, and having the heart established with grace. And what is the subject of these possible or desirable developments? And what lack of motive or of consolation did *they* feel, who have gone before us in every kind of excellency? And what more perfect characters can we expect than the Leightons and Howes, who, it now seems, were denied illuminations conferred on individuals just entering into the kingdom of God, without a religious education, and from the midst of worldly dissipation or indifference? And where are the superior effects or discoveries, which we are assured not only possess truth, but are of the greatest efficiency? We need not be afraid to compare the converts, the benefactors, the sufferers, the martyrs of one school with those of another. "No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new; for he saith, the old is better."

Here again it is refreshing and delightful to turn to One distinguished by consistency, and who has awakened and retained attention so long, not by strangeness, but excellence; not by crying, Lo, here; or lo, there; but by walking stedfastly in the truth; and whose path has not been the glare of the meteor, or the "lawless sweep of the comet," but the shining light of the sun, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Nothing would be more satisfactory to the Dedicator, now in the evening of life, than to be able to think, that in this particular he had been in some measure the follower of his admired and honoured Friend. And by the grace of God he can say, that it has been his *aim* and *prayer* to move straight on, never turning aside to the right hand or

to the left, to avail himself of any temporary and adventitious aids of popular applause; constantly engaged in pressing only the plain and essential principles of the Gospel, and in matters of inferior importance, if not of disputable truth, having faith, to have it to himself before God.

There has been perhaps some little shade of difference in our doctrinal views; but as it has not been sufficient to impair your approbation of my preaching and writings, so I am persuaded you will find nothing in these volumes, should you ever look into them, to offend, even if an occasional reflection does not *perfectly* suit your own convictions. In one thing it is certain we differ. We are not unwilling respectively to own the Episcopalian and the Dissenter. But in this distinction, we feel conviction without censure, and avow, preference without exclusion. And has Providence no concern in such results as these? Suppose, my dear Sir, you had been placed originally in my circumstances, and I had been placed in yours; is it impossible or improbable that each of us might have been differently minded from what we now are? Yet who determines the bounds of our habitations? Who administers the events of our birth, and of the days of our earlier and most durable impressions? Who arranges the contacts into which we are brought with religious connexions and spiritual instructors? And does not bigotry, that quarrels with every thing else arraign the agency of the Most High, and indirectly at least censure *him*? We do not use this argument without qualification, or push it to every extent; but there are evidently some who not only "judge another man's servant," but another man's master.

We may in a degree value ourselves as being

members of a particular church, but we shall be saved only as members of the Church universal; and if we are in a right spirit, we shall prize the name of a Christian a thousand times more than any other name, however extensive or esteemed the religious body from which it is derived.

Uniformity of sentiment may be viewed much in the same way with equality of property. In each case, the thing itself is perfectly impracticable; and if it could be attained it would be injurious, rather than useful. It would abrogate many Divine injunctions, contract the sphere of relative virtue, and exclude various duties, which go far into the amiableness and perfection of Christian character. It is better to have the protection of the sovereign, and the obedience of the subject; the wages of the master, and the labour of the servant; the condescension of the rich, and the respect of the poor; the charity of the benefactor, and the gratitude of the receiver. "If all were the seeing, where were the hearing?" The hands and the feet could not dispense with each other, or even exchange their place and office. If persons acted from hypocrisy, formality, and education, only, they might present a kind of sameness; but if they think for themselves, as they are not only allowed, but required to do, it is easy to see, that with the differences there are in the structure of mind, and in outward opportunities and advantages, they cannot fall precisely into the same views. But let them exercise forbearance and candour, let them emulate each other, let the strong bear the infirmities of the weak, and not please themselves,—and we shall have a sum of moral excellence, far superior to what could be derived from a dull, still, stagnant conformity of



opinions. And is it not for this state of things, among those "that hold the head, even Christ," that the Apostle provides? "Let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind." For one believeth that he may eat all things; another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." The quotation is long: but I fear the principles of the reasoning and the enforcements are not as yet duly regarded by any religious party; though there are, in our respective communities, individuals who walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing. And I cannot forbear adding a few more of those fine Texts, which do not exclude the *number*, but diminish the *importance* of the articles of difference, and press

only those in which Christians agree. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." "We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but a new creature." "In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." Let us abide in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. He has set our feet in a large place. There is room enough, in the plain around Stonehenge, for persons to walk and commune together very commodiously—Why should they try to get on some old molehills, or barrows over the dead, or hedge banks, where they must press against each other, or jostle each other down?

A cordial agreement in the essentials of the Gospel *should* induce us to put up with minor differences; and a superior and constant engagement of the soul to the most important objects of religion *will* draw off, *comparatively*, the attention from inferior ones, leaving us neither leisure nor relish for them.

When therefore, in reference to the latter day glory, it is said, "they shall see eye to eye," we are persuaded, with Baxter, that there may not be a much more complete uniformity of opinion in many things than there now is. But there will be a more perfect accordance *in* great things, and a more perfect agreement *concerning* lesser ones. They will see eye to eye, as to the propriety of one measure;—That if we cannot be of one mind, we should, like the first converts at Jerusalem, be "of one heart and of one soul."

“But does not the Scripture speak much of unity among Christians?” It does—And what that oneness is may be inferred from fact as well as from reasoning. The Saviour prayed that “all” his followers might be “one:” and God had before promised that he would give his people “one heart and one way.” Now it can hardly be supposed that this prayer and this promise have not been accomplished. But if they *have* been fulfilled, it has not been in a sameness of sentiment with regard to a number of things pertaining to religion, but with regard to the substance of religion itself:—a oneness, unaffected by minuter distinctions; a oneness, which included as servants of the same Lord, and as guests at the same table, a Hopkins and a Bates, a Watts and a Newton, a Porteus and a Hall: a oneness that resembles the identity of human nature, notwithstanding all the varieties of man.

When will some persons believe or remember, That where there are no parts there can be no union? That where there is no variety there can be no harmony? That it doth not follow because one thing is right that another is absolutely wrong? That others differ no further from us than we differ from others? That it is meanness and injustice to assume a freedom we refuse to yield? That children, differing in age, and size, and dress, and schooling, and designation, belong to the same family? And that the grain growing in various fields and distances is wheat still, sown by the same hand, and to be gathered into the same garner?

And would it not be well for us often to reflect on the state of things in another world, where it is believed by all, that the differences which now too often keep

the true disciples of Christ at a distance from each other will be done away? And to ask ourselves whether we are not likely to be the more complete, the more we resemble the spirits of just men made perfect? And whether we *must* not have a meetness for glory before we *can* enjoy it?—But what preparation in kind, what in degree, for such a communion above, have they who feel only aversion to all those who, however holy and heavenly, walk not with them in the outward order of religious administrations? How special and circumscribed is what some mean by the communion of saints! It only respects those within their own enclosures. They would inhibit their members from having much intercourse in company, and from all, even occasional intermixture in religious exercises, with those they hope to mingle with for ever! But not to observe that such intercourse and intermixture are perfectly consistent with general and avowed regularity of preference and practice; and the good influence it has to remove the haughty and offensive repulsion of exclusiveness;—Is there (as “we are taught of God to love one another;” and as, “every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him,”) is there no danger of putting a force upon pious tendencies, and of chilling the warmth of holy emotions by the coldness and abstraction of system and rules? The remark of Paley on another subject may be well applied here. He is arguing the propriety of refusing every application of common beggars for relief. Some, he observes, have recommended the practice by strong reasonings; and he himself seems much inclined to the same side. But he is too frank not to ask, “Yet,



after all, is it not to be feared, lest such invariable refusing should suffocate benevolent feeling?"

You, my dear Sir, are a proof that Christian liberality may abound, without laxity and without inconsistency. And other instances of the same lovely character are increasingly coming forward; in which we see how rigid contention for minor partialities can yield to the force of Christian charity, and disappear before the grandeur of "the common salvation," and the grace of "one God the Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all." "Perhaps," says Robert Hall, "there never was so much unanimity witnessed among the professors of serious piety as at the present. Systems of religion fundamentally erroneous are falling into decay; while the subordinate points of difference, which do not affect the principal verities of Christianity, nor the ground of hope, are either consigned to oblivion, or are the subjects of temperate and amicable controversy; and, in consequence of their subsiding to their just level, the former appear in their great and natural magnitude. And if the religion of Christ ever assumes her ancient lustre—and we are assured by the highest authority she will—it must be by retracing our steps, by reverting to the original principles on which, as a social institution, it was founded: we must go back to the simplicity of the first ages; we must learn to quit a subtle and disputatious Theology, for a religion of love, emanating from a few divinely energetic principles, which pervade every page of inspiration, and demand nothing for their adoption and belief besides a humble and contrite heart."

Bunyan, in his Holy War, says, that Mr. Prejudice

fell down and broke his leg: "I wish," adds the honest (and Mr. Southey himself does not refuse him the attribute), the matchless Allegorist—"he had broken his neck." Cordially joining in this devout wish, and apologizing for the undesigned length and freedom of this desultory Address, allow me, with every sentiment of regard and esteem, to subscribe myself,

My dear Sir,

Your much obliged and humble

Friend and Servant,

WM. JAY.





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# MORNING AND EVENING EXERCISES.

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APRIL 1.—MORNING.

“His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” LUKE xxii. 44.

IT is a question whether this sweat was blood comparatively; that is, whether it resembled blood, whose drops are denser, heavier, and larger, than those of common perspiration—or really blood. The latter is possible.—There have been instances of the kind well authenticated. Such an opinion early and generally prevailed; and nothing was more common among the Fathers, than to consider this as one of the times when he bled for us, each of his pores, as a kind of wound, flowing with that blood without which there is no remission. It is, perhaps, impossible to determine this absolutely. But even allowing—what we by no means consider as proved—that it was only blood in resemblance; it must have been most extraordinary. For he was abroad in the open air; upon the cold ground; the night far advanced; and the weather chilling—for the High Priest’s servants made a fire to warm themselves. Here was enough to have checked perspiration. Yet his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground!

And what could have caused it? Surely not the mere circumstances of dying. From Socrates, from

Seneca, there was no such effusion; they were cool and calm. Look at the martyrs; and even those of the more timid sex; they were tranquil in the prospect, and in many instances came forth from prison smiling, and blessed the instrument of death—What was the reason of this difference? they had not to contend with the powers of darkness. But with regard to him this was their hour, and the power of darkness. They had not to bear the sins of others, nor yet their own: whereas the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all.

We indulge here no curious speculations; and we require the definitions of no human creeds: but neither will we be reasoned out of the plain language and meaning of the Scriptures. We believe God; and not as some believe him; that is, as a jury in a court believe the testimony of a suspected, a discredited witness, relying no further upon his deposition than it is collaterally supported; and thus yielding no honor to himself. We do not found our belief on knowledge; but derive our knowledge from belief. We believe in the unerring wisdom and veracity of God; and he has told us, that Christ also suffered for sins, the just for the unjust; that he bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows; that the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and that by his stripes we are healed.

Men think lightly of sin; but an awakened conscience feels it a burden too heavy to bear. It has made the whole creation groan. But see Jesus bearing it in his own body; and his sweat falls as great drops of blood down to the ground! What, then, if you should bear it in your own person, O sinner! Why, it will sink you to the lowest hell. Yet bear it

you must, if you reject or neglect him; for there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin—He that believeth on the Son of God, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son of God hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. Yet,

“Each purple drop proclaims there’s room,  
And bids the poor and needy come.”

Oh! let me look on him who suffers thus. Oh! let me mourn over my sins, which caused his anguish—

“Twere you that pull’d the vengeance down  
Upon his guiltless head;  
Break, break, my heart; and burst, my eyes;  
And let my sorrows bleed.”

But let me also rejoice. That bloody sweat proclaims my discharge from condemnation, and tells me the law is magnified and made honourable.

And can I help loving him? Love begets love. And what can evince love like suffering? And such suffering! And for such criminals! And not only without their desert, but their desire!—Lord! what wilt thou have me to do? Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.

## APRIL 1.—EVENING.

“Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.” JOHN xviii. 7.

EVERY thing here is remarkable.

—How wonderful that any in the very family of Jesus should be base enough to betray him! But here we find Judas, who had been called to the Apostleship, and invested with power to work miracles, and a few hours before had partaken of the

Holy Supper, heading a band of men and officers, which he had obtained from the Chief Priests and Pharisees; and betraying his Master and Benefactor into their hands, with a kiss!

—How wonderful was the courage of Jesus, that though he knew all things that should come upon him, not only remained in the place, but came forth from his retreat, and presented himself! This was the effect of a love stronger than death. Perfect love casteth out fear.

—How wonderful was the rebuke and the repulse which his enemies met with! No sooner did he pronounce the words, "I am He," than they went backward, and fell to the ground. Whether some rays of glory broke from his sacred body, or whether he immediately, by his power, impressed their minds, we know not; but, surely, here was enough to induce them to discontinue the unhallowed enterprise.

—Yet—how wonderful, that in a few moments they rise, and recover heart enough to approach him a second time—So that he asks them *again*, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. This was partly the influence of numbers. A man alone may be often easily deterred from an evil action. But it is otherwise where hand joins hand, and the sinner is seen and supported, and stimulated or reproached, by his fellow-creatures. It shows us, also, the hardening nature of sin. When the men of Sodom were smitten with blindness, they even then groped by the wall to find the house where the heavenly visitants were. Upon the removal of each plague, when Pharaoh saw there was respite, he hardened his heart. And Ahaz, in his affliction, sinned yet more and more against God. And of how



many may it be said, "Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved: thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return!"

—Neither means, nor even miracles, will avail when God leaves a man to himself. Persons often think that a dreadful event will do what ordinances have failed to accomplish. But we have known many who have been stripped and reduced; and yet their minds have not been humbled before God. They have resembled fractions of ice, or stone; broken, but not changed; each piece retaining the coldness and hardness of the mass. They think that a spectre would be much more efficacious than a preacher! Vain hope! If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

O thou God of all grace, fulfill in my experience the promise—"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."

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APRIL 2.—MORNING.

"Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he; if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way." JOHN xviii. 8.

HERE we see the Saviour's readiness to suffer. He makes not the least attempt to escape from the hands of his enemies; but tells them a second time that he

was the victim they sought after; and yielded himself up to be bound, and led away, without murmuring or complaint. This willingness was magnified—by the greatness of his sufferings—his knowledge of all he was to endure, his deserving it not, but bearing it for others—and his power of escape.

Here we see his tenderness towards his disciples. He would not have them to die or suffer; or, at present, even to be apprehended and alarmed. They were unable to bear it. They could not follow him now. He has the same heart still, and, from this instance of his conduct, we may conclude—That he will suffer no affliction to befall his disciples, unless for some wise and useful purpose—That he will sympathize with them in their suffering—That he will afford them support and comfort—That in due time he will wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Here also we see his authority and dominion over their adversaries. We are mistaken if we suppose that he presented a request, when he said, If ye seek me, let these go their way. A request would have been nothing in the present state of their minds, and provided, as they were, with officers, and an armed band of Roman soldiers. It was in the nature and force of a command. It was an absolute injunction. "I will not surrender unless these are allowed to depart. You shall not touch a hair of their head." Accordingly they make not the least objection, and suffer them to retire unmolested.

This was in character with his whole history. In his penury he always displayed his riches; in his deepest abasement he emitted some rays of his glory.

—The manhood was seen; but it was, so to speak, deified humanity. What majesty was combined with

the humiliations of his birth—and of his death! Does he here submit? He is a conqueror, demanding his own terms, and obtaining them.

And did not this serve to enhance the sin of his disciples in denying and forsaking him? They were overcome by the fear of man. But what had they to fear? Did they not here see that their enemies were under his control; and could do nothing without his permission? Did he not here obtain for them a passport, insuring their escape and safety? Yet they have not courage and confidence enough to declare themselves on his side, and to stand by him!

And do we not resemble them? How often do we shrink back from the avowal of our principles, or turn aside from the performance of some trying duty! And wherefore? We also yield to the fear of man, that bringeth a snare. Yet what can man, what can devils do unto us? Satan could not touch an article of Job's estate, till leave was granted him. Our foes are all chained; and the extent of their reach is determined by the pleasure of Him who loved us well enough to die for us. If he careth for us, it is enough.

When shall we realize this, and go on our way rejoicing? If He says to events, Let that man succeed in his calling—opposition and difficulties are nothing—he gets forward: the blessing of the Lord maketh rich. If he says to sickness, Touch not that individual; the pestilence may walk in darkness, and the destruction rage at noon-day: a thousand may fall at his side, and ten thousand at his right hand—it shall not come nigh him. If He has anything more for us to do or suffer, though life be holden by a rotten

thread, that thread is more than cable—we are immortal till our change comes.

“Hast thou not given thy word  
To save my soul from death?  
And I can trust my Lord  
To keep my mortal breath.  
I’ll go and come,  
Nor fear to die  
’Till from on high  
Thou call me home.”

APRIL 2.—EVENING.

“Christ died for us.” ROM. v. 8.

So have many. All those who have paid their lives to the injured laws of their country have died for us; and if we derive not improvement from it, the fault is our own. The world drowned in the Deluge, perished for us. The Jews, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, suffered, as the Apostle tells us, as ensamples and admonitions to us. We have buried friends and relations; but

“For us they languish, and for us they die.”

That husband of *her* youth; that wife of *his* bosom; that child of *their* love, have been removed, to wean the heart from earth, and to show how frail we are.

But are we going to rank the death of Christ with such deaths as these? We would rather class it with that of an Apostle: “If I be offered,” says Paul to the Philippians, “upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you.” This was noble. But was Paul crucified for us?

—No—“It is *Christ* that died” *His* death is peculiar and pre-eminent; infinitely peculiar and pre-eminent.

This was indicated by the prodigies that attend it. Yet on these we shall not enlarge. Neither shall we dwell on the many touching circumstances of his death. Such a tragical representation may be derived from the history as would draw tears from every eye, while the heart may be unaffected with, and the mind even uninformed of, the grand design of his death. The question is, What was this design?

Some tell us that it was to confirm the truth of his doctrine, by the testimony of his blood; and to suffer, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps. And this is true. And we believe it as fully as those who will go no further. But is this the whole, or the principal part of the design? We appeal to the Scriptures. There we learn that he died for us, as an expiation of our guilt, and to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. There we see that He died for us a sacrifice, a ransom, a substitute; that He redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us—that He once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God.

—Exclude this, and the language of the Bible becomes perfectly embarrassing and unintelligible. Exclude this, and what becomes of the legal sacrifices? They were shadows without a substance; they prefigured nothing. For there is no relation between them and his death, as he was a martyr, and an example: but there is a full conformity between them and his death, as he was an atonement. Exclude this, and how are his sufferings to be accounted for at all? For he did not die for the sins of others, and he had none of his own. Where, then, is the God of judgment? That be far from him to do after this



manner; to slay the righteous with the wicked. So far the Jews reasoned well: they rejected him, for they considered him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. And so he was: but "he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Exclude this, and with what can we meet the conscience burdened with guilt? With what can we answer the inquiry, How shall I come before the Lord? With what can we wipe the tear of godly grief? But we have boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus. Surely he hath borne our grief, and carried our sorrow. His death was an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. The all-sufficiency, and the acceptableness, were evinced, by his discharge from the grave, and his being received up into glory. There, within the veil, our hope finds anchorage—

"Jesus, my great High Priest,  
Offered his blood, and died;  
My guilty conscience seeks  
No sacrifice beside:  
His powerful blood did once atone,  
And now it pleads before the throne."

Yet even this is not all the design. Christ died for us, not only to reconcile us, but to renovate; not only to justify us, but to sanctify. The one is as necessary to our recovery as the other. And both equally flow from the Cross. For he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity;

and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

“Oh! the sweet wonders of that Cross,  
Where God, my Saviour, groan'd and died!  
Her noblest life my spirit draws  
From his dear wounds and bleeding side.”

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## APRIL 3.—MORNING.

“He was buried.” 1 Cor. xv. 4.

THE resurrection of our Saviour necessarily presupposes his death, but not his burial. His burial was an additional thing: and, as his flesh could not see corruption, *seemed* an unnecessary one. But it is worthy of our notice.

Who begged his body for interment? It was Joseph and Nicodemus. And here we cannot help remarking these petitioners themselves. Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but these men were of distinguished rank and condition in life. A few of these there have been in every age of the Church; sufficient to show, not that the cause of God depends upon *them*, but to redeem religion from the prejudice, that it suits the vulgar only; and also to prove the power of divine grace, in counteracting temptation. Yet, down to this period, Joseph and Nicodemus had not been persons of much promise; so far from it, they were ashamed and afraid to have their regard to our Lord known, when his disciples were professing their resolution to follow him to prison and to death. Behold the change! The latter, in the hour of trial, forsake him, and flee: the former come, and openly acknow-

ledge him. Let us all seek after more grace ; but let none trust in themselves, or despise others. "The strong may be as tow;" and "the feeble may be as David." The man of whom we now think nothing, may acquire confidence and zeal; and not only pass us in the road, but leave us very far behind in attainments and usefulness. "Who hath despised the day of small things? A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory."

—Who attended as mourners? "The women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid." With us, some days elapse before interment; but here, only two hours were allowed between his execution and his burial. If, indeed, his body had not been implored by Joseph and Nicodemus, it would have been interred at Golgotha—thrown into a hole dug under the cross.

—Who carried the sacred corpse, we know not; but they had not far to bear it; "for the sepulchre was nigh at hand." This was not a grave of earth, but of stone; hewn out of a rock. Thus there was only one avenue leading to it: no one, therefore, could approach it from the sides or behind; and the entrance was watched, guarded, and sealed. It was also a new tomb, in which never man was laid. And here, again, we see the hand of God; for had there been other bodies, some would have pretended collusion, and the evidence would not have been so simple and complete as it now was, when the body lay alone there. Finally; it was not his own. His followers are mad after the honours and riches of the world; but, living and dying, he had not where to lay his

head. He was born in another man's house, and buried in another man's grave.

—But why was he buried at all? First. His burial was an additional confirmation of his death, upon which every thing depended. An examination was made while he was upon the cross; and finding him dead already, they brake not his legs; but a soldier pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water—But now his mouth, and nostrils, and ears, were filled with the odours and spices—and who can question a man's death when he is buried? Secondly. It was the completion of his humiliation. "They have brought me into the dust of death." Now that he ascended, what is it but that he descended first into the lowest parts of the earth? Thirdly. By this he sanctified the grave, and prepared it for his people. They would have been afraid to go in, but he entered it before them. They can lie in his bed, after him. He has freed it from every horror. He has softened it and made it easy for them.

"And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre." Let us sit by them and contemplate. *There* lies in that rock, He who made it. *There* are sealed up the lips which said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." *There* are closed, the eyes which always beamed compassion, and wept for human woe. *There*, cold, are the hands which were laid on little children, to bless them, and that delivered the widow's son to his mother. *There* lies the life of the world; and the hope of Israel. He was fairer than the children of men. He was the image of the invisible God. He went about doing good. He was rich, and, for our sakes, became poor—

“Come, saints, and drop a tear or two,  
 For him who groaned beneath your load :  
 He shed a thousand drops for you,  
 A thousand drops of richer blood.”

On the tombs of mortals, however illustrious, the humbling sentence is inscribed, “Here he *lies*.” But I hear the angel saying, “Come, see the place where the Lord *lay*.” He *was* dead, but he is alive again ; and because he lives, we shall live also.

“Break off your tears, ye saints, and tell  
 How high your great Deliv’rer reigns ;  
 Sing how he spoiled the hosts of hell,  
 And led the monster, Death, in chains.  
 Say—‘Live for ever, wond’rous King !  
 Born to redeem, and strong to save.’  
 Then ask the monster, Where’s thy sting ?  
 And, Where’s thy victory, boasting Grave ?”

## APRIL 3.—EVENING.

“After that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once ; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.” 1 Cor. xv. 6

As the resurrection of the Lord and Saviour is of such unspeakable importance, it cannot be too clearly and fully ascertained. Now the way to prove a fact is to call in evidence : and if, in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word shall be established—what shall we say, when we meet with such a cloud of witnesses as the Apostle here brings forward ?—witnesses the most competent, eye-witnesses ; ear-witnesses ; witnesses who even handled the Word of Life—men, not of hasty credence, but slow of heart to believe ; men, whose despondence was only to be removed by proof the most undeniable, and upon which



they hazarded every thing dear to them; and braved reproach, and suffering, and death.

—This interview took place in Galilee, where our Lord had principally resided, and preached, and done his wonderful works. There he was best known, and chiefly followed. Before his death, he had said, "After I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee." On the morning of his resurrection, we find the angel knew of this design; and, therefore, meeting the woman, he said, "Go quickly, and tell his disciples, that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him; lo! I have told you." Influenced by this authority, "the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them." From whence, it appears, that the very spot had been named. And, from the words of the Apostle, it is certain that the disciples did not repair to it by themselves; but having made known among their connections the approaching interview with a risen Saviour, they enjoyed the privilege, in company with this large assembly. "He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present; but some are fallen asleep." Every thing here is striking.

The *name*—"Brethren." O lovely distinction! When will it swallow up every other? When shall the religious world remember, that all real Christians, notwithstanding their differences, are all justified by the same blood; sanctified by the same grace; travelling the same way; heirs of the same glory; children of the same Father; "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named?"

The *number*—"Above five hundred." We were

not aware that he had so many adherents. In Jerusalem, they could only bring together one hundred and twenty. But there were more in the country. Let us not judge of our Lord's followers by a particular place or party. Let us remember, that he has his hidden ones, whom circumstances may never bring to our notice. How surprised should we be, if any event was to draw them together from their various retreats. How should we exclaim, "These, where have they been?"—What a multitude, then, which no man can number, will there be, when they shall be all assembled, out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues!

The *ravages of time*—"Some have fallen asleep." And no wonder, in the lapse of six-and-twenty years. Who has not, during such a period, been summoned to the grave to weep there? Whose heart within him has not been desolate, at the loss of friends and relations? Even the Church has not been a sanctuary from the robber and spoiler. The wise and the good, the holy and the useful, the followers and witnesses of the Redeemer, have finished their course and their testimony, and have slept the sleep of death.

*Distinguished preservations*—"The greater part remains unto this present." The majority of five hundred spared so many years—When, from the numberless perils of life, it was marvellous that any *one* of them should have lived even a *week*, or a *day*! Have we survived others? Let us not ascribe it to our own care, or the goodness of our constitution; but say, with Caleb, when so many carcasses fell in the wilderness, "The Lord has kept me alive!"

And let us be concerned, that protracted life be

devoted to Him, who is "the length of our days," and "the God of our salvation."

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## APRIL 4.—MORNING.

"Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." PSALMS xvi. 10, 11.

OUR Lord tells us of many things concerning himself, not only in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, but in the Psalms. Some have contended, that he is immediately regarded in every passage in them. This error, arising from a noble truth carried too far, has led the holders of it to take liberties with the translation, and with the original too. We may safely follow the applications of the Holy Ghost; and we are sure, from the language of Peter in the Acts of the Apostles, that, in the words before us, David speaks of the Messiah, or rather introduces the Messiah himself as the speaker.

Jesus knew that he was to suffer, and die; but he knew, also, that death could not feed upon him. He knew he should be laid in the grave; but he knew, also, that he should not remain there—Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell. Hell, here, does not mean the place of the miserable, but the abode of the dead. This he entered; but continued not long enough there for dissolution to commence: "Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."

The path of life was his passage from the sepulchre to glory; from the tomb of Joseph to the palace of the Great King. This path no one had yet trodden.

Enoch, and Elias, had entered heaven, but did not go thither from the grave. Thousands had entered heaven, but left their bodies behind. But he did not leave his body. He is therefore called, the first-born from the dead, because he was the first that entered heaven after lying in the grave. He was the first-born, too, in the dignity and influence of the life he realized. Lazarus, and the widow of Nain's son, and others, though they were revived, died again. But he, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. He lives as no one else ever lived, or ever will live. He lives, having the keys of hell and of death. He lives in the possession of all power in heaven and in earth. He lives as our Head and Representative; as the source of all spiritual influence; as the Father of the everlasting age. And he shall see his seed, and shall prolong his days; and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

And because he lives, we shall live also. His resurrection is the model, the cause, the proof, and the earnest, of our own. For there is a union between Christ and Christians, by which they are federally and vitally one. When, therefore, he died, they were crucified with him; and when he arose and ascended, they were quickened together with him, and raised up, and made to sit with him in the heavenly places. And though their bodies return to the dust, *they* will not see corruption *for ever*--for this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality.

The believer, therefore, can also say, Thou wilt shew *me* the path of life. This life means, the blessedness reserved in heaven for the people of God

after the resurrection. David here describes it:—In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore. It has three characters. The first regards its *source*—It flows from “his presence.” He is the fountain of life, and the supreme good of the mind.

The second regards its *plenitude*—It is *fulness* of joy. In this vale of tears every pleasure has its pain, and every comfort its cross. We pursue satisfaction, but we grasp vanity and vexation. We look to Jesus, and find him the consolation of Israel. But consolation supposes trouble. His followers are described, not only by their rejoicing, but their mourning—without they have fightings, and within they have fears. They have blessed frames; and, in some religious exercises, they seem to be partakers of the glory that shall be revealed. And so they are; but it is by a glimpse, a taste, a drop; the fulness is above.

The third regards its *permanency*—The pleasures are *for evermore*. Uncertainty, as well as deficiency, attaches to every thing here. We embrace our connections, and lo! they are gone. We set our hearts on that which is not.

If there was a possibility of the destruction, or loss of the blessedness above, we should be miserable in proportion to its greatness. From the moment of knowing it, the thought would poison all the joy. But—It is a crown of glory that fadeth not away. It is everlasting life!



## APRIL 4.—EVENING.

“And these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” JOHN xvii. 13.

“IN the world.” For as yet he *was* in it, but was just going to leave it and go unto the Father. His last words, considering their conduct, might have been reproachful, or at least reproving: but the things he now spoke were adapted to encourage, and *designed* to comfort them. These things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

Observe the *nature* of this joy—“*my joy.*” There is a joy he himself feels in contemplating the welfare of his people. In saving them, “he rejoices over them with singing.” As the good shepherd, he lays the sheep he has found on his shoulder, “rejoicing.” He sees of the travail of his soul, and is “satisfied.” But his joy here is not the joy of which he is the subject, but the joy of which he is the medium, author, source, and—only source. Jesus the Saviour! All that is good and blessed is thine. The blood that redeems us is thine. The righteousness which justifies us is thine. The grace that sanctifies us is thine. The power that supports us is thine. It is thy peace that composes us. It is thy joy that must be in us, or we must lie down in sorrow. Thou art “the consolation of Israel;” and there is not a drop of real comfort but flows from thee. But in thee there is every thing that can excite, every thing that can justify joy—even though it should be joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Observe the *means* of this joy—“*These things I*

*speaking in the world*, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." This may be extended to all that he had delivered during his whole ministry : but it principally refers to his present speech, and the prayer he had offered in their hearing. These were to animate and console them. In these they could see his heart, his desires, views, and purposes, on their behalf. Here they heard him say that he had finished the work that was given to him to do ; and that he had power over all flesh, to give eternal life to as many as the Father had given him. Here they heard him interceding for their preservation, their holiness, their union, their glorification—What could they desire more ? And what can we desire more ? For, having fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us, *we* are authorized to receive this strong consolation, and claim an interest in this intercession, according to his own words : "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." Yea, we have the advantage of them, since we are more fully acquainted than they were at this time with the dignity of his person, his dearness to God, and the grounds on which he pleads for us, in his obedience unto death, and in his sacrifice on the Cross. We know that the Father heareth him always. It was David's privilege to have an advocate at court, and he was the king's own son. But we have a much greater advantage in having an advocate with the Father. What was Jonathan to Jesus ? Jonathan, too, had to plead with a father that hated his friend. But says Jesus, "I say unto you, that I will pray the Father for you : for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God."

Let us observe one thing here—The joy of the believer is not a visionary thing. It is not the produce of delusion or ignorance. It flows from conviction; it appeals to the word of the Saviour. They who put their trust in him, know his name, and are able to give a reason of the hope that is in them.

Observe the *measure* of this joy—"That they might have my joy *fulfilled in themselves*." They possessed it already, but defectively. In conversion, a good work is begun; but it is carried on until the day of Christ. The rising sun, the growing corn, and every other image employed in the Scriptures, import the imperfections and progressions there are in the experience of Christians. Hence there are degrees in faith; and we read of weak and of strong faith, of little and of great faith. Some have a competency of faith; others are affluent, they are rich in faith. Some have hope; others have the full assurance of hope. Some from various preventions have little of the pleasures of religion; others walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost. Some have many distressing doubts and fears; others are filled with all joy and peace in believing.

Observe, lastly, the *importance* of this joy. This undeniably results from the concern our Saviour here expresses. Men often err; and we cannot conclude that a thing is eminently, or even really excellent and valuable, because they prize and pursue it; for what trifles, what follies attract and influence many! But as the Lord Jesus thinketh so it is; his judgment is always according to truth. And therefore says he, *These things speak I in the world, that my joy might be fulfilled in themselves*. He knew the importance of this possession—to the honor of our religion, and the

recommendation of the ways of godliness to others—to our activity and zeal in the divine life—to our weanedness from the world—to our support in trouble—and our comfort in the valley and shadow of death. In all these the joy of the Lord is our strength.

Let the Saviour's concern regulate the concern of ministers. Let them be helpers of our joy, and seek the tongue of the learned, that they may know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.

Let the Saviour's concern regulate the concern of Christians. They should distrust themselves; but they should be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. They should watch and be sober: yet they should be scripturally confident. Are the consolations of God small with them? They are not small in themselves, and they were not small in the experience of the first believers. If, therefore, they are small with us, is there not a cause? Is there not some secret thing with us? Let us search and try our ways, and turn again unto the Lord. Let us resolve to sacrifice whatever has caused him to hide his face from us. Let us pray, Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit. Let us ask and receive, that our joy may be full.

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## APRIL 5.—MORNING.

“Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.” JOHN xii. 27, 28.

HERE we see the Saviour's anguish in realizing the approach of the closing scene of his life. Yet the trouble of his soul could not have been produced by

the certainty of his suffering and death only, it must have principally regarded the nature of them. Unless we allow this, he loses his pre-eminence. Some of the sages of antiquity met their end with firmness. Socrates and Seneca died with composure. Stephen did not say, "Now is my soul troubled," when they were leading him to be stoned. Paul did not tremble when he said, "I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." We have read of martyrs who issued from their prisons with singing, and embraced the stake. And though crucifixion was ignominious and painful, many of the Lord's followers had to bear a death much more torturing and lingering; yet they were not troubled or afraid. But his sufferings and death were to redeem us from the curse of the law; and therefore he was made a curse for us. The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree. And here it is that we see what a dreadful evil sin is. Many deem it a light thing; but hear him saying, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." See him "sore amazed and very heavy." Behold "his sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground." A Christian can never deem sin a trifle, or be reconciled to it, after he has seen the agonies of him who was pierced by it. And as the citizens of Rome, upon the uncovering of the wounded and gory body of Cæsar, rushed forth to find and avenge his murderers, so every Christian flees to arms at the sight of the death of Jesus.

"Furnish me, Lord, with heavenly arms,  
From grace's magazine;  
And I'll proclaim eternal war  
With every darling sin."



—He here speaks as one in a strait; as if struggling between inclination and conviction, his feeling and his work. “And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour.” There is no real difficulty here. He was human as well as divine; and the Godhead did not absorb the humanity, or change its attributes. The Word was made flesh, and had all the passions and infirmities of our nature, sin only excepted. But suffering in itself can never be agreeable to our nature; for then it would be no longer suffering. If therefore we submit to it, it is not from pleasure, but for some reason or purpose. This reluctance, instead of being inconsistent with submission, serves to enhance it, and is even necessary to it. There is no resignation in giving up what we do not value. If we had no inclination to food, there would be no self-denial in fasting. There is no virtue in a stone; and there is no patience in bearing what we do not feel. Patience is injured by feeling too little as well as by feeling too much; by despising the chastening of the Lord, as well as by fainting when we are rebuked of him.

Our Saviour therefore acquiesces in the event. But in his mode of expressing it, he leads us to observe two things concerning his death. First, that it was not casual: “For *this cause* came I unto this hour.” It was written in the volume of the book.—It was a covenant transaction. He assumed a body and entered our world for the very design.—“The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many”—He became incarnate in order to die. Secondly, it was voluntary —“For this cause *came I unto this hour.*” He was not

compelled or deceived into the business; but as it was fore-appointed, so he fore-knew and foresaw it; and acted from independence and choice. He loved us and gave himself for us. He had his eye upon this scene from the beginning, and in all his travels of woe held it in view till he reached it, saying, "Lo! I come to do thy will, O God. I delight to do thy will: yea, thy law is within my heart."

Hence his pious prayer—"Father, glorify thy name." As if he had said, "If my sufferings will be for thine honor, let them fall upon me, regardless of my feelings." Did he then question this? By no means. His language is rather the expression of confidence. "I know that my death will infallibly and infinitely advance thy praise; and therefore I cheerfully bow to thy pleasure"—Just as he said, after instituting his own supper, and when about to enter Gethsemane: "But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence."

But what is it to glorify his Name? Glory is the display of excellence. God's excellence cannot be increased, but it may be made known; and this is the design of God in all his operations. The heavens declare his glory. All his works praise him. "And every labor of his hands shows something worthy of a God"—

"But in the grace that rescued man,  
His brightest form of glory shines;  
Here on the Cross 'tis fairest drawn,  
In precious blood, and crimson lines."

If God had punished sinners in their own persons according to their desert, his law would have been magnified, and his righteousness and truth confirmed;

and *thus* he would have been glorified. And this glory of God is secured *here*: but observe the *additional* advantage. Had the wicked been punished, though his law would have been magnified, and his truth and righteousness confirmed, we could have seen nothing else—nothing of his mercy and love: but here mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other. We see the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us by Christ Jesus. And we draw the consolatory conclusion: “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”

Herein also he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence. At present, indeed, we see comparatively but little of this glory: yet even now the sight is enough to fix and fill the minds of believers. And not only are they relieved and refreshed by the contemplation, but they are sometimes carried away, and catch glimpses of those irradiations reserved for another life, which will draw forth the wonder and praise of the heavenly world for ever—Angels desire to look into these things.

We love not to consider Christ only or chiefly as our model. But after holding him forth in his higher characters as our sacrifice, and righteousness, and strength, it is more than allowable to bring him forward as our example. And *then* nothing will be more acceptable to Christians. The love shed abroad in their hearts by his Cross, will make them long to resemble him, and pray that they may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. And this conformity is not only desirable, but necessary. “If any man,” says he, “will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his

cross, and follow me." Remember therefore that "he suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should tread in his steps." We may feel our sorrows, and even desire the removal of them; but we must do it as he did. "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Like him, also, we must, as sufferers, regard the honor of God, and be concerned that his name may be glorified by our trials. "Wherefore glorify ye the Lord in the fires." You cannot do this in the same way with him. His sufferings were mediatorial, atoning, and meritorious. But yours may be instructive, encouraging, and useful. They may recommend your religion, and prove that God never forsakes his people, but is with them in trouble, and comforts them in all their tribulation, and enables them to acknowledge "he hath done all things well." "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

## APRIL 5.—EVENING.

"They sung an hymn." MATT. xxvi. 30.

THIS is a circumstance not mentioned by the other evangelists. But it is very instructive.

We should like to have known the very hymn they sung. The psalms the Jews used at the end of the Passover began with the one hundred and thirteenth, and ended with the one hundred and eighteenth. Was the hymn here used one of *these*? Or was it any one else of the compositions of David? Or was it the words of any other pious poet? We cannot determine. We have every reason to believe the subject of it was suited to the occasion; and never had language been so honored before. We might also have



wished to know the manner in which they performed it. Was it recitative or choral? Symphonious or responsive? But how did *he* join? Oh! to have seen the emotions of *his* countenance! to have heard the strains of his voice!—But the Scripture is not designed to indulge our curiosity. It therefore only says, “they sung an hymn.” But the fact itself teaches us that singing is a Christian ordinance. It is sanctioned by our Lord’s own example. And the authority for the usage was not overlooked by the Apostles; as we see both in their practice and precepts. Thus at Philippi, we find Paul and Silas at midnight not only prayed, but “sung praises unto God; and the prisoners heard them.” And thus Paul says to the Colossians, “teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” And James enjoins those who are merry to “sing psalms.”

But observe by what this singing was immediately *preceded*, and by what it was immediately *followed*.

It was immediately *preceded* by the administration of his own supper. Hence we learn that singing should accompany this sacred ordinance. “Joy becomes a feast.” And this is a feast—a feast of love and friendship—a feast of reconciliation between God and us—a feast upon the sacrifice—a feast in which we are reminded that “his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed.” And we ought not only to be thankful for such a death, but for such a memento and emblem of it. For here we have signs so lively and sensible, that before our eyes he is evidently set forth crucified amongst us. And what an honor that we who are not worthy of the children’s crumbs are allowed to sit down with the King at his table, as a



proof that "we are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of faith!"

"While all our hearts, and all our *songs*,  
Join to admire the feast;  
Each of cries, with thankful tongues,  
Lord, why was I a guest?"

It was immediately *followed* by his entrance into Gethsemane. When they had sung a hymn, "they went out into the Mount of Olives." Now this garden may be viewed as a place of suffering, and of retirement; and so two things may be observed.

First. That the prospect of suffering should not prevent our joy and praise. Though our Saviour had announced the treason of Judas; foresaw the denial of Peter, and the desertion of all the disciples; and knew that he was now going into Gethsemane, to agonize there, and there to be apprehended . . . away to crucifixion—yet this does not hinder him *continuously* singing a hymn! Does not this say to *his* followers, Rejoice evermore? In every thing give thanks? A Christian should say, with David, "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. I look for changing scenes and trying dispensations; but I shall always have to sing of mercy as well as judgment—and of mercy in judgment." "Come," would Luther say to Melancthon, a wise man, but more timorous than himself, when prospects looked dark and distressing at the beginning of the Reformation: "Come, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm: and let earth and hell do their worst." Should it not reprove and humble us that we have so little of the mind that was in Christ Jesus, especially when we consider the

greatness of his sufferings, and the comparative lightness of our own? If we are not filled with murmurings and complainings, we are often silent in his praise, as if we had nothing to be grateful for, though encompassed with his goodness. The impression of one trial will make us insensible to the claims of a thousand blessings. "But Christ might well sing. He knew God would be with him in the trying scene." And will he not be with you? Has he not said, "I will be with thee in trouble?"—"And he had a joy set before him at the end of his conflict, the prospect of which might well induce him to feel more than submission." And have not you? Could you see the issue of all your trials, you also would—you must—rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Secondly. That religious ordinances and engagements should not lead us to dispense with retirement. When therefore they had ended the communion by singing a hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives, whither he had often resorted for prayer and meditation. It is *alone*, after you have left the worship, and especially the table of the Lord, it is *there* that you can revive the remembrance; that you can bring home to yourselves what you have heard and seen; that you can call your consciences to an account; that you can yield yourselves afresh unto the Lord; that you can implore that Divine influence which alone giveth the increase.

The neglect of this practice will explain the reason why many who attend the services of the sanctuary derive so little advantage from them—"Through desire a man having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom."

## APRIL 6.—MORNING

“And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.” LUKE xxiii. 26.

IN the course of a few hours he had taken many a weary and painful step. From the communion-chamber he had walked to the garden of Gethsemane—From Gethsemane he was hurried away, bound as a prisoner, to Annas—From Annas to Caiaphas—From Caiaphas to Herod—From Herod back again to Pilate—so that he had already traversed a great part of Jerusalem. But he must take one melancholy walk more—It is from the judgment-hall to Golgotha.

With us, not only hours, but days, and frequently even weeks elapse between the sentence of death and the execution; and Tiberius, the present emperor, had issued an order some years before, that no criminal should be executed till ten days after his condemnation. But the benefit of this edict did not extend to murderers and rebels, as it was judged necessary for the public safety and tranquillity that such malefactors should be immediately put to death. Jesus was arraigned as a mover of sedition as well as a blasphemers; and therefore, as soon as ever the sentence was pronounced upon him, he was led away to be crucified. But he was not taken by surprise. He knew that his hour was come; and was ready to welcome its approach.

He was not conveyed to the place of execution, but walked. Nor was this all. Among the Romans, the criminal carried his cross. The design of the custom was good. It was to intimate that he was the author

of his own punishment; and seemed to say to him, "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself?" The outstretched arms of the criminal were fastened to the transverse beam, while the upright part of the cross rested between his shoulders, and extending down his back dragged on the ground. In this manner was Jesus to go forward. And in his case the imposition was not only humiliating but painful, owing to the bruises and soreness produced by the scourge. Yet thus was he pressed with the heavy load, and had to exert all his strength to draw along the instrument of his death. And considering his agony in the garden, his fatiguing night, his want of sleep and refreshment, and his loss of blood, no wonder he was found unequal to the continuance of the task, at least in the manner his executioners wished.

Hence the relief afforded him. This relief was not from tenderness of him, but to hasten the execution. They saw that he grew weak, and frequently paused; and were fearful lest he should fail before he reached the top of the hill. This would have occasioned delay; and their wish was to get the crucifixion over, and the bodies taken down before the Sabbath began. And such was their haste, that by nine o'clock, he was lifted up from the earth! He had drawn the burden through the streets, and was now between the city gate and at the foot of Calvary, in the ascending of which his difficulty would be increased. Here the procession met Simon. Simon was of Cyrene, a city of Lybia, a thousand miles distant from Jerusalem. He was an African and a black—never the worse for this—yea we hope it was a token for good with regard to a race chargeable with so great a sin. He seems to have been a man of some note; at least he was the father



of Rufus and Alexander, who were afterwards distinguished in the Church. Simon was coming up from the country, either to do business or to attend to the Passover. Nothing therefore could be more accidental than this meeting.

But how much in his history depended upon it! We cannot help thinking he was a secret disciple of Jesus; and seeing him thus suffering, and ready to sink, he betrayed his sympathy and regard by his looks and words. This was enough for the soldiers and the rude rabble, who setting up a laugh exclaimed, "Well, since the negro pities him, he shall help him." And so "on him they laid the cross, that he should bear it after Jesus." In another place it is said they "compelled" him; but this regards their enforcement of the thing; for it is obvious he made no resistance. Had he been an unrelenting Jew, an enemy to Jesus and his doctrine, he would have railed and cursed; and the Priests and Scribes would have interposed for him, and desired the soldiers not to make a laughing-stock of one of their fellow-citizens. Or, if for a moment he discovered a little reluctance, he soon felt enough not only to make him willing to yield, but to enable him to rejoice that he was counted worthy to suffer shame for his Name.

And is not the same thing required of us? Has not Jesus said, "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple?" We too at first may be ready to shrink back; but further information and experience induce us cheerfully to deny ourselves, and to go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach. We see him before us—dignified and holy—enduring the curse for us—and leaving us only "this light affliction, which is but for a moment, and



which worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

“ We tread the path our Master trod,  
We bear the cross he bore ;  
And every thorn that wounds our feet  
His temples pierced before.

“ O patient, spotless Lamb !  
My heart in patience keep ;  
To bear the cross, so easy made  
By wounding thee so deep.”

## APRIL 6.—EVENING.

“And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry ?” LUKE xxiii. 27–31.

ONLY six days before, he had descended into Jerusalem from Bethany, by the mount of Olives, when the multitude spread their garments in the way, and cried Hosannah! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! Many of the same people are now following him as he goes to Calvary to be crucified. As it was now a festival, there was an immense concourse of people: this would readily increase the number of spectators. But a public execution always collects a crowd. There must be something exceedingly attractive and interesting in such a sight, or so many would not repair to it; for they go voluntarily; and there

have been instances in which a reprieve has disappointed their expectation, and led them to murmur that they had taken so much trouble in vain. Yet a public execution might be rendered morally impressive and useful. "The way of transgressors is hard." See there what an evil and bitter thing sin is. See the degradation of our common nature. *That* criminal may be less guilty than myself. He may have had few of my advantages. If left in the same circumstances he was, what might I have been?

Our regard for the sex makes us lament that so many females always attend such scenes as these. They have certainly more compassionateness than men; but they have also in their nature a principle of curiosity, and a love of excitement, which sometimes carry them away. Here were many women, lining the sides of the road by which Jesus was to pass, some leading their children, and some carrying their babes. But they did themselves honor; for while others insulted, they "lamented him." Perhaps some of them had been healed by him. Perhaps some of them had heard him preach. Were any of the mothers here, whose infants he had taken in his arms and blessed? Was the widow here, whose son he had raised from the dead? Was the woman here, who had washed his feet with her tears? *Could* Martha and Mary be here? Or Mary Magdalene and the other Mary?—these, seeing him as he came opposite to them, in this piteous plight—bleeding—exhausted—pausing and panting—the executioners savagely goading him on—and the populace mocking at his grief; could refrain no longer, but strongly, as the word implies, expressed their sorrow, by cryings and tears, by wringing of their hands and striking their breasts. This required

courage as well as tenderness. It showed an interest in the supposed culprit: it seemed a censure of his suffering as unjust and cruel. And persons were severely forbidden to indulge in public condolence with offenders whom the Sanhedrim had condemned—But “love is strong as death; many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.”

Our Saviour's kindness and presence of mind are here seen. The nearness of his execution, and his present anguish, do not absorb him in selfish feeling; but he *turns* to these daughters of Jerusalem, and says, “Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children.” Some suppose that he blamed these tears because he knew they sprang from ignorance of the cause and design of his death. Others suppose he blamed them because he did not deserve these tears, as he was a guilty sufferer, the Lord having laid upon him the iniquity of us all. The former surmise is ill-founded, the latter absurd. The fact is, he did not *blame* them at all, but would intimate, that if they knew what was ready to befall them, their sorrow would be more required for themselves than for him. It was an expression of his pity, excited by a view of the dreadful calamities which would desolate their city and their country, when even Jewish mothers, who so valued offspring, would hail the childless, and others envy the happiness of those who would be buried alive! “For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.”

Of these judgments he intimates the cause, in a question drawn from a proverb: “For if they do

these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" The green tree refers to himself, the dry to the people of the Jews. Surely, wood full of moisture is less inflammable than wood withered and dead. If I suffer who am innocent, how will the guilty escape—and who are adding my death to all their other crimes? It shews us that sin is danger, and prepares us for the wrath of God. "Fury is not in me. Who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together." And there are degrees of peril and of punishment. If the ignorant are destroyed for lack of knowledge, what will become of those who possess and abuse it? If they escaped not, who refused him that spake on earth, how much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven? If the children of ungodly parents perish, what will be the doom of those who have been trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? If Moses and Aaron were so severely chastised for a single offence to which they were greatly provoked at the waters of strife, what have they to expect who sin constantly and without excuse? If he deals thus with his friends, how will he treat enemies? "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner." "The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?"

## APRIL 7.—MORNING.

“But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water.” JOHN xix. 34.

THIS incident is recorded by none of the other evangelists. But John more than sufficiently attests it. The fact is very striking and improvable; and perhaps we are not instructed in it as we ought to be.

The ancients enlarge much on this wound; and some of the moderns are not far behind them. One makes it an allusion to the manner in which Adam obtained his wife, and by which he was a figure of him that was to come. While the Lord from heaven was sleeping the sleep of death, his side was opened, and from thence his Church was taken, to whom he has espoused himself. Another makes it the cleft of the rock into which God puts us, as he did Moses, when he passes by and proclaims his goodness. A third represents it as a window made in his body, by which we can look into his heart, and see his love. Herbert, in his *Temple*, makes it a letter-bag, into which we may put any of our requests, and which shall be thereby safely conveyed to God!!

It is painful to think what freedoms have been taken with the Scriptures; and what silly and profane conceits have been indulged on subjects at once the most sacred and awful. And yet many affect to wonder at the impression made by such improprieties upon the minds of the young, and the educated, and the sceptic, and the scoffer! We are not answerable for the dislike men feel to the truth itself; but we should distinguish between the offence of faith, and the offence of folly.



The occasion of the event was this. The Jews, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath-day—for that Sabbath was an high day—besought Pilate that their legs might be broken; and that they might be taken away. The worst of men are often anxious about the external and ceremonial parts of religion. Conscience as well as decency requires something; forms and rites are not difficult, and they leave the state of the heart untouched. What a mixture was here! What superstition and wickedness! What regard to the Sabbath and the Passover, and what swiftness to shed blood! The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. Why do they not dispatch the sufferers at once, instead of only hastening their death by addition to their anguish? The violence and the pain probably produced the most dreadful outcries. In this barbarous manner the soldiers came and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. One of these was the penitent thief. He had prayed to be remembered when Jesus came into his kingdom, and had received the assurance that he should that very day be with him in Paradise; and the promise would now be fulfilled. Yet this does not exempt him from the same usage endured by his impenitent companion. All things come alike to all. But though outwardly treated alike, what a difference was there between them in their feelings and in their end—one passing from torture into torment—the other rejoicing that all his suffering was for ever ended, and he should instantly enter into the joy of his Lord!

Jesus had now breathed his last. Was it owing to the greater sensibility of his mind, and delicacy of his body, that he expired sooner than his fellow-sufferers?

Rather, we see here the voluntariness of his death. He had said, No man taketh my life from me; I lay it down of myself. As he was the sacrifice, so he was the priest; and through the eternal Spirit he offered himself without spot to God. He did not die therefore from a mere exhaustion of nature. He cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost; and Pilate, as a thing perfectly unusual, when informed of it, marvelled that he was already dead. When, therefore, they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: but "one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water." From hence we see that our Saviour had not been long dead; for had the flesh been cold, and the fluids coagulated, the effusions would not have taken place. Those who understand anatomy, and are aware of the membranous bag which contains the heart, can easily account for the flowing of water as well as blood.

But we have something of more importance here than any physical reflections. Let me, O my soul, consider the fact, as an instance of the indignity to which the Saviour submitted for my sake; as a confirmation of the reality and certainty of his death; as a symbol of the manner of my recovery by him; and as a display of Providence in fulfilling the Scriptures. Take your own thoughts first upon these remarks, and then read the illustrations in the following exercise.

## APRIL 7.—EVENING.

“One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water.” JOHN xix. 34.

LET us view this fact as *an instance of the indignity and insult to which the Saviour submitted*. When we consider not only the pre-existence, but the original greatness of the Lord Jesus; and read all the magnificent things the sacred writers have said of him; how surprising do his grace and condescension appear! He took not on him the nature of angels—then they could not have pierced him; but because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise himself took part of the same. Yet he did not assume our nature in any of its higher forms or conditions. Some are rich; but he had not where to lay his head. Some are admired and caressed; he was despised and rejected of men. Some are nobles and princes; he made himself of no reputation, but took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. The death was not only a scene of pain, but of shame: and to render it the more ignominious, he was numbered with the transgressors, and crucified between two thieves. He was also insulted when dying, and mangled when dead. O my soul, was all this humiliation for me? And shall I deem any thing too dear to resign, or too trying to endure, for him? How was that precious body prepared for him by the Holy Ghost treated! How was his whole frame agonized when his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground! How was his flesh ravaged by the scourge when the ploughers ploughed upon his back and made long their furrows! How were his temples lacerated with

the crown of thorns! How was his face marred when they plucked off the hair! How were his hands and feet pierced with the nails—while the soldier's spear pierced his side! And how should I regard all this? The wounds of a general who bleeds in the defence of his country are deemed not disgraceful, but scars of honor; and are viewed with emotions of tenderness, admiration, and praise. Jesus displayed much more than such memorials. He retained them after his resurrection. When he appeared to the Apostles, "he shewed them his hands and his feet." Thomas was not then present, and continued incredulous, notwithstanding the testimony of ten witnesses. To him he also appeared; and said, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless but believing." He wears them now. John saw him as a lamb that had been slain. He will wear them for ever; and the view of them will serve to excite the renewed praises of his people.

Let us view it as *a confirmation of the reality and certainty of his death*. It could not be said he was only in a swoon; or half dead; or that his resurrection was nothing more than a recovery of suspended animation. His enemies were concerned to know that he had expired; and they fully ascertained it. The very act of wantonness in the ruffian soldier demonstrated it. He could not have survived the wound, had it been given him in perfect health. It penetrated the pericardium, and transfixed his vitals. But what is this to us? Every thing. Without his death, the whole Gospel is a cipher, and all our hopes are a delusion. He died for us. And he died for us not only or principally to confirm his doctrine, or to



be our example; but to bear our sins in his own body on the tree; and by the one offering up of himself to perfect for ever them that are sanctified. He made peace by the blood of his cross. He died, too, as a testator: he made a new will, the legacies of which were invaluable; but it could never have become valid without his death: "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." What, therefore, establishes my faith in his death is, beyond expression, important. If it be false, I am left to all the effects of the Fall. If it be true, my triumph is complete—It is all my salvation and all my desire.

Let us view it also as *a symbol of the manner of our recovery by him*. Hear what the reporter of the fact has said concerning it in his Epistle: "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood." It would be far short of the Apostle's meaning to consider the allusion as sacramental, looking only at Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The reference regards the double efficiency of the Lord's death—to satisfy—and to sanctify. Blood to redeem, and water to cleanse; the one to remove the curse of sin, the other the love of it. Neither of these blessings is to be found unless in the cross. But they are both to be derived from a dying Jesus: and therefore iniquity need not be our ruin if we apply to him. He is a Prince and a Saviour. He gives repentance and remission of sins.

Let us be convinced of our need of both; and combine both in our creed and our experience. It is a



defective view of the death of Christ, to look to it for comfort only. He died not only to atone, but to purify: "He loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might cleanse it by the washing of water by the word." The water and the blood were not severed in their effusion; neither can they be divided in their application. Happy they who value both; and can say, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength!"

Lastly, we may view it as *a display of Providence in the fulfilment of the Scripture*. Hence, John immediately adds, "And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe." Believe what? That Jesus was the Messiah, by the correspondence between him and the prophecies going before. Observe those he mentions: First, says he, "For these things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken." Referring to the language of David, "He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken." This was not only foretold of him in words; but also prefigured in type. He was our Passover. Now of the Paschal Lamb it was said, "Neither shall ye break a bone thereof"—This could not have been verified had the soldier fractured his legs. Nor would another have been accomplished had he not pierced his side. Again, another Scripture saith, "They shall look on him whom they pierced:" referring to the language of Zechariah, "They shall look on me whom they have pierced." Thus the eye of prophecy, ages before the accomplishment, saw this soldier piercing him personally and literally; and the Jews by means of him: and therefore he adds, "and they shall mourn for him." And some of them, after they had crucified him, were

brought to repentance, and sorrowed after a godly sort. And others of them, yea all Israel, will do this, when the veil is taken from their heart. It is also now realized in every penitent who mourns for his sins as the cause, whoever were the instruments of the sufferings and death of the Saviour.

But how true it is that "the Scripture cannot be broken!" And how wonderfully does God accomplish it—by friends—by foes—by the righteous—by the wicked—by what is casual—by what is criminal! Nothing was further from the thoughts of this unfeeling soldier than the end answered by his brutality; but he was God's instrument, and acted an important and indispensable part in proving his omniscience and veracity.

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APRIL 8.—MORNING.

"They shall look on him whom they pierced." JOHN xix. 37.

It is added in the prophecy from which these words are taken—"And they shall mourn for him." And who is not ready to say, Nothing could have been more becoming in those who were chargeable with the deed, when they reflected that they had crucified an innocent being, a being who only went about doing good, a being made higher than the heavens—surely they ought to have mourned for him "as one mourneth for his only son, and to be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." But suppose *we* should have been consenting unto his death? Suppose *we* should have been the cause of it? Suppose his persecutors and murderers were only the instruments we employed? Then our resentment will operate nearer home, and our grief will rend our own souls.

And this is the case with a real penitent. By faith he perceives and realizes his own bloodguiltiness in this awful scene ; and says,

“And now the scales have left mine eyes,  
Now I begin to see ;  
Oh ! the curs'd deeds my sins have done,  
What murderous things they be !

“—’Twere you that pull’d the vengeance down  
Upon his guiltless head ;  
Break, break, my heart ! oh ! burst, mine eyes,  
And let my sorrows bleed ”—

And there is no true repentance but what flows from the sight of the Cross.

Yet they are not only to look upon him with godly sorrow, but also with enlivening hope. For he was not only pierced by them, but for them ; and by his stripes they are healed. Strong consolation is necessary to meet true conviction of sin. And here it is to be found, and here only. Every other refuge will be found a refuge of lies ; every other comforter a miserable comforter. But that which satisfies the righteousness of God, may well satisfy the alarmed and afflicted conscience of the sinner. We have redemption through his blood ; and this blood cleanseth us from all sin. We oppose to the number and heinousness of our offences the infinite value of the sacrifice. We are reconciled unto God by the death of his Son. This death we plead, and are accepted in the Beloved ; and we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

We look on him also, and derive submission from the sight. The Apostle tells us to “consider him” as a sufferer, lest we be “weary and faint in our minds.”

His cross is the tree by which the bitter waters in the wilderness are healed. His death has redeemed us from the curse of the law; and nothing penal is left in any of our trials. The most painful of them are only the medicines of our heavenly Physician: the corrections of a loving Father. They are blessings in disguise. Are we tempted to despond or complain at our afflictions? What are our endurings compared with his?—

We look on him also to excite and inflame our zeal. Many motives to obedience are mentioned in the Scripture, and therefore it cannot be improper to be influenced by them. Yet the purest and the most powerful motive is drawn from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the first Christians owned and felt it. The love of Christ, says Paul, constraineth us to live not to ourselves, but to him that died for us and rose again. The divinity is equal to the poetry when the bard of night sings—

“—— O bleeding Calvary,  
The true morality is love of thee.”

Hear Hervey—In a letter dated Weston Favell, May 6th, 1748, he writes thus to a person he had befriended. “With regard to the little assistance which I have contributed, and which Mrs. —— thinks worthy of her acknowledgments; I beg of her to observe that it is owing, wholly owing to her adored Redeemer. To him, to him alone, she is obliged—if there be an obligation in the case, for this friendly donation. He has been pleased to command this instance of my gratitude for his unspeakable tender mercies to my soul. He has been pleased to declare that he will look upon such a piece of kindness as done to his own

blessed self. This makes me, this makes all believers glad to embrace every such occasion of shewing our thankfulness to our infinitely condescending gracious Lord. The action which Mrs. ——— calls generous, does not arise, as she expresses it, from any innate nobleness of mind. I remember the time when this heart was as hard as the flint, and these hands tenacious even to avarice. But it is Jesus, the quickening Spirit, and the lover of souls, who has made your friend to differ from his natural self. If the flinty heart is melted into compassion, it is melted by a believing consideration of his most precious blood. If the avaricious hands are opened and made ready to distribute, willing to communicate, they are made so by the free grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore not unto me, not unto me, but unto the great and good Redeemer, are all the returns of gratitude due."

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## APRIL 8.—EVENING.

"Joseph of Arimathæa (being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews) besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus." JOHN xix. 38.

—WE may consider this man in connexion with prophecy. Though all the prophets gave him witness, no one so specially testified of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, as Isaiah. Observe the whole of the fifty-third chapter—But it is the ninth verse that bears upon our subject. Bishop Lowth's rendering has been universally deemed an improvement—"And his grave was appointed with the wicked, but with the rich man was his tomb." Here it is clearly intimated that there would be an



instance of overruling providence. Had the common and natural course of things taken place, he would have been buried with other malefactors in Golgotha, the place of a skull. *There* were thrown the bodies of the two thieves—but had his been thrown there, the prediction could not have been verified. But the word was gone out of God's mouth, and was firmer than heaven and earth. And if we turn from the prophecy to the history, we shall see how, though his grave was likely to have been with the wicked, yet with the rich man *was* his tomb. "When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathæa, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: he went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed." Let this induce and enable us to confide in the word of God more fully and more firmly. It is a tried word. For near six thousand years it has been continually put to the test; and it has always been found faithful—"The Scripture cannot be broken."

We may consider Joseph of Arimathæa in reference to his rank in life. He was "a rich man." How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! Yet we here see the camel drawn through the eye of the needle: for what is impossible with men is possible with God. He was "an honourable counsellor." Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. Have any of the rulers believed on him? Suppose they have not? Is all goodness or sense confined to them?

The common people gave much better proof even of their wisdom and taste than those who despised them; “the common people heard him gladly”—But we answer, yes; some of the rulers have believed on him: witness Joseph of Arimathæa; and Nicodemus. The wife of Herod’s steward followed Jesus; we read in the Acts, of honourable women not a few; and in the Epistles, of saints in Cæsar’s household. We find Abraham rich and powerful enough to furnish from his own family four hundred armed men. Godliness once rode in the second chariot of Egypt; and led Daniel, the prime minister of one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, to retire three times a day for praise and prayer: and in all ages there have been some instances of piety in the higher walks of life. There have indeed been few enough to shew that the cause of Christ has not depended on them, while they have been numerous enough to confute the prejudice that religion is only suited to the ignorant and vulgar.

We may also view this man in connexion with his infirmity and imperfection. The Jews had passed a decree that if any man confessed Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Hence many who believed on him, yet feared to confess him. This was for some time the case with Joseph. He was “a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews.” “The fear of man bringeth a snare.” It is this that leads many to ask, not whether such a thing be right; but what will people think and say of me if I adopt it? It is this that keeps many from following their convictions, and acknowledging what they *know* to be the truth. But we ought faithfully to adhere to the dictates of conscience; and not only *be* Christians, but appear such, confessing with the mouth, as well as believing

with the heart; and remembering that if we are ashamed of Christ, he will be also ashamed of us. We do not therefore justify Joseph in this part of his conduct. Yet let us remember—that some individuals, owing to their stations and connexions, have difficulties in religion to contend with, which others know nothing of, or they would feel and pray for those they are now perhaps only disposed to censure and condemn—That grace operates in various degrees—and, that between the beginning and the progress of its work in the soul there may be as great a difference as between the mustard-seed and the mustard tree—And that we may hope the Lord has more disciples than we are aware of, only they are kept back from our observation by things blamable in themselves, yet compatible with sincerity. Little did Elijah think, when he said, I am left alone, that there were seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Little did the Apostles imagine their Lord had a secret, yet real disciple in Joseph of Arimathæa.

Therefore again observe this man in the increase and development of his Christian principle. For he now shews himself openly, and acts a noble and distinguished part. The effect was owing to the death of Jesus—This did more than his miracles and preaching—This does every thing to purpose in the Divine life—Hence our strength, as well as comfort—“I, if I be lifted up from the cross, will draw all men unto me”—Prudence would have said, forbear. You will involve yourself in trouble and expense. You will draw upon yourself suspicion. You will excite prejudice. You will injure your usefulness—Besides, he is now dead, and what good can you do his re-

mains? But Joseph confers not with flesh and blood. It required no little zeal and courage to own a regard for one that had been judicially executed under the charge of blasphemy and sedition—to come forward and publicly ask for his body—to give it an honourable interment in his own garden and his own tomb, which had never yet been used. This was more than identifying himself with the malefactor; it was doing him honour to the utmost. It was far surpassing his Apostles: they had all forsaken him, and disowned their master dying and dead. But this man goes forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach, and braving every danger; for he now feels that perfect love that casteth out fear.

Let us not decide upon the character of persons too soon. Let us not give them up because of some present weaknesses, much influenced perhaps by peculiar circumstances. Let us not despise the day of small things. We have often seen, in the experience of the bruised reed and the smoking flax, judgment brought forth to victory: and we are confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. How delightful to see persons proving better than our fears, and far surpassing all our hopes! What changes in our views and feelings sometimes render us a wonder to others, and perhaps also to ourselves! How unlike may the present be to the future! In the days of Queen Mary, when so many were put to death for denying the doctrine of transubstantiation—that Moloch at whose shrine so many victims have been immolated—a poor man was convicted and



sentenced to be burnt alive. In his way to the place of execution he was very pensive and depressed. But when he came in sight of the stake, overpowered for the time with fear, he involuntarily exclaimed, "Oh! I cannot burn! I cannot burn!" Some of the priests supposing he wished to recant, immediately approached and addressed him. This, however, was not his design; but he wanted more of that confidence and consolation which would enable him to endure becomingly the fiery trial. He was left some minutes to himself, during which, in great earnestness and agony of spirit, he prayed that God would manifest himself more clearly to his mind—when God so shone in upon his soul, that, raising and clapping his hands, he cried with a loud voice—"Now I can burn.—Now I can burn."

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## APRIL 9.—MORNING.

"If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." PHIL. iii. 11.

HERE the subject of consideration is, *the resurrection of the dead!* But it is obvious the Apostle does not refer to it as an event; for as an event it will be universal, and we shall be the subjects of it, whether we are willing or unwilling—for there will be "a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust." But he refers to it as a privilege. That can hardly be called a deliverance that takes a man out of a bad condition, and consigns him to a worse. What is it for a criminal to be led out of prison to be tried, and condemned, and executed? What is it for the body



to be revived, but not renovated—inheriting the principles of all the evils entailed upon it by sin, and rendered immortal for the duration of misery? The grave is better than hell. But while some will come forth unto the resurrection of damnation, others will come forth unto the resurrection of life—a resurrection that shall change the vile body, and fashion it like the Saviour's own glorious body—and complete all that the Saviour has procured for us, and the Gospel has promised to us.

With regard to the acquisition of a share in this blessedness, the Apostle makes use of language that implies—valuation—difficulty—variety—submission: "*If by any means* I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

—It implies valuation of the object. Things may be important in themselves, and not prized by those whom they concern. And we see this with regard to the blessings of the Gospel: for though they are as superior to all worldly good as the heavens are higher than the earth, yet men make light of them; and were we to judge of eternal salvation by the regard paid to it by the multitude, we should consider it a trifle unworthy a moment's serious thought. But what is it in the view of awakened souls? The "pilgrim," when leaving the City of Destruction, and implored by his friends and family to return, put his fingers in his ears, and ran, crying, "Life! life! eternal life!" Such wait for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning. They hunger and thirst after righteousness. They count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord. *This*, says Paul, is the prize of my high calling. If I miss it, I am undone for ever. If I reach it, the possession will

realize all my hopes and desires—The very prospect, as I can make it my own, enlivens and cheers me in all my labours and sufferings—"If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

—It implies the difficulty of the acquirement. All excellent things require application and diligence; and he who rationally expects success must be *determined*, and bring his mind to exertion and endurance. What pains and patience are necessary to attain human learning! "There is no royal way to geometry." And is Divine wisdom the prey of the idle and careless? Must we labour for the meat that perisheth; and can we, without labour, obtain that meat which endureth unto everlasting life? No, says the Saviour, even in the very passage in which he speaks of "giving it"—where it is obvious, therefore, that the giving is not opposed to diligence, but desert. How readest thou? "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." "Fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life." But take those who, in their religion, know nothing of the privations and hardships of the soldier; nothing of the unbending alacrity of the racer; who never redeem their time; whose day is only distinguished from their night by the substitution of sloth for sleep; who exercise no self-denial; who never mortify the deeds of the body; whose souls do not follow hard after God—would it not be perfectly absurd for one of these to say—"If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead"?

—It implies variety in the manner of reaching glory. This does not apply to the procuring of the blessing. This is done already. Jesus said, as he expired, "It is finished." He made peace by the blood of his cross;

and brought in everlasting righteousness; and all that believe on him are justified from all things. At the Deluge, people could be drowned any where; but there was only one ark. The way of salvation has been always the same from the beginning; but the methods by which this salvation is applied are various. Various are the means employed in our conversion; and various are the courses of duty in which we actually obtain the promise. All the Lord's people obey; for he is the author of eternal salvation only to them that obey him: but they are called to obey in very different ways. One is required to act the Christian in single, another in relative life. One fills a public station; another, a private. Some are to receive with gratitude; others are to give with cheerfulness. Some must discharge the duties of prosperity; others, those of adversity. Our sufferings, too, vary, as well as our services. One glorifies God by bearing reproach and persecution; another, by enduring bodily pain and infirmities. These have much outward trouble; and those, more inward conflict. Each is to take up *his* cross, and to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. For,

Finally, it implies submission—not prescribing; not objecting; but referring every thing to the Divine pleasure—"If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Whatever they are, I bow to them." This implicit submission is necessary, to evince the earnestness, and even sincerity, of our conviction. If a patient really believes and feels his disease and danger, he will shew it by readiness to yield to the remedies the physician enjoins, however trying they may be. Here, indeed, the great contention lies with many. It does not regard the end: they

would have heaven—but not by *any* means—it must be by those of their own devising or choosing. Are not the rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Jordan? May I not wash in them, and be clean? But when a man is at the point to die for ever—he will acquiesce in any means of deliverance, however mysterious to his reason, however humiliating to his pride, however averse to his sin and sloth.

God will have the whole management of our case; or he will have nothing to do with it. And he ought to have it. The submission is an homage due to his sovereignty. We have no claim upon him; and it is mercy and grace the most wonderful, that he will save and bless us at all. We owe it, also, to his wisdom and goodness: for, though he is a Sovereign, in the exercise of his prerogative he does not act arbitrarily; but does all things well: his work is perfect. The issue, too, is such as to justify our submission to *any* means in securing it. The success will infinitely more than remunerate all our services and sacrifices. And the success also is sure. How many cases are there, in which means, any means, may be used in vain! The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. In every department of human enterprise, the successful candidates are few. Yea, the event in *no* other pursuit is infallible. But if you are like-minded with Paul, you need not fear the result. The gate of mercy was never yet shut against a returning sinner. Their heart shall live that seek God.



## APRIL 9.—EVENING.

“Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.” ROM. vi. 8.

THE death and the resurrection of Christ constitute the substance of the Gospel; and our concern with them, as doctrinal truths, includes more than our admitting them into our creed. They must become internal principles, and produce in us corresponding effects. He died; and we must be dead—dead to the Law; not as a rule of life, but as a covenant of works. Dead to the world: not as the scene of God’s wonderful works; nor as a sphere of duty: nor as a field of usefulness; but as the enemy of God, and our portion. Dead to sin—This includes nothing less than our avoiding it: but it intends much more: we may be alive to it even while we forsake it. But we must no longer love, or relish it—and *thus* no longer live in it. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?

We must be dead *with him*. We are dead with him *virtually*. For he is Head and Representative of his Church; and, therefore, what he did for his people is considered as done by them. We are dead with him *efficiently*. For there is an influence derived from his cross, which mortifies us to sin; and this influence is not moral only, consisting in the force of argument and motive—though this is true; and nothing shows the evil of sin, or the love of the Saviour, like Calvary: but it is spiritual also. He died to purify, as well as to redeem; and he not only made reconciliation for the sins of the people, but received gifts for men, and secured the agency of the Holy Spirit. There is no real holiness separate from the grace of the Cross.



There he draws all men unto him. We are dead with him as to *resemblance*. We are planted together in the likeness of his death; and therefore our death is called, as well as his, a crucifixion: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." I am, says the Apostle, not only dead, but crucified with Christ. That mode of dying was a painful one; and a visible one; and a gradual one; and a sure one; for the moment the body was fastened to the cross, it was as good as dead; the bones might be broken to accelerate the event, but it was never taken down alive. All this is easily applied to the crucifying of the flesh, with the affections and lusts.

But he rose, and now lives—and we shall live *with him*. That is—in consequence of his living. Because he lives, we shall live also. For we are quickened together with Christ, and are raised up, and made to sit together in heavenly places. That is—in his company. Where I am, there shall also my servant be. We have much in heaven to endear it. How delightful will it be to join our friends with all their infirmities done away!—But to depart, to be with Christ, is far better. That is—in fellowship with him. We may live with another, and not live like him. We may be with another, and behold his estate, but not share it. But when he who is our life shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory. I appoint unto you, says he to his disciples, a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table, in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Even our vile body shall be fashioned like his own glorious body. And the same duration attaches to his blessedness, and ours. I am

alive, says he, for evermore; and our end is everlasting life.

Finally, Paul *believed* all this. And let us do the same; but let us believe it *as* he did. That is—Let us believe that we shall live with him, *if* we be dead with him. Some believe it without this. *Their* faith is only presumption. Whatever they rely upon; whether their knowledge, or orthodoxy, or talking, or profession; they are only preparing for themselves the most bitter disappointment—if they are not dead unto sin, and delivered from the present evil world; for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

—But let us also believe, that if we be dead with him, we *shall* also live with him. The inclusion is as sure as the exclusion; and takes in every diversity and degree of grace. Whatever be their apprehensions of themselves, none of them all shall come short of this glory. It is as certain as the promise, and oath, and covenant, of God, and the death and intercession of the Saviour, and the pledges and earnest of immortality, can render it.

Therefore, be not faithless, but believing. It was used by Christians to animate and encourage each other, in the Apostles' days, as a common and familiar aphorism; and they gave it full credit: "It is a faithful saying: for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him."

## APRIL 10.—MORNING.

"The sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."  
1 PET. i. 11.

CONNECTED with the sufferings of Christ there was a threefold glory.

—There was a glory that *preceded* his sufferings. This is implied in his language—"I came forth from the Father;" "I came down from heaven." But it is expressly mentioned when he says, "The glory that I had with thee before the world began." What condescension can there be where there is no previous dignity? And what possessions can a being claim before his existence? But he was rich, and for our sakes became poor. He was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God. He took upon him the form of a servant, and made himself of no reputation.

There was a glory that *accompanied* his sufferings. There is often much parade at the death of a monarch, and, by a show of greatness, an attempt is made to conceal or alleviate the disgrace of real littleness. But what are the suspensions of business, the splendid equipage, the tolling of bells, the solemn music, the discharge of artillery—

"HE dies—the heavens in mourning stood"—

The sun was darkened. The earth shook. The rocks rent. The graves were opened. The dead arose. Spiritual trophies, blended with the prodigies of nature. Peter's heart was broken at a look. The centurion, watching, exclaimed, Surely this man was the Son of God. All the people that came together to that sight smote their breasts and returned. The

dying thief believed with the heart, and confessed with the tongue, unto salvation; and received an assurance of an immediate place in paradise. And what a scene of moral glory was here also displayed—in his readiness to suffer; in his apology for his slumbering disciples; in the order to Peter to put up his sword; in his healing the ear of his enemy's servant; in his stipulating for the safety of his Apostles; in his confession before Pontius Pilate; in his bearing, without resentment, the mocking, the spitting, the scourging; in his sympathy with the weeping daughters of Jerusalem, in his way to Calvary; in his tender concern for his widowed mother, on the cross; in his prayer for his murderers—Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!—where shall we end? Here, Celsus endeavours to turn his glory into shame. Having represented him as despitefully used, arrayed in purple robes, crowned with thorns, and nailed to the tree, he cries out, "In the name of wonder, why, on this occasion at least, does he not act the God? and hurl some signal vengeance on the authors of his insults and anguish?" But, O thou enemy! he does act the God. Any madman on earth, or fury in hell, is capable of anger, and wrath, and revenge. But to bear the most shocking provocations, and, though commanding the thunder and the flame, forbear to punish, and only pity!—If it be the glory of a man to pass by a transgression; and the noblest triumph is to overcome evil with good; he died gloriously beyond all example. Yes—says even a Rousseau: "If the death of Socrates was the death of a sage, the death of Jesus was the death of a God."

There was also a glory that *followed* his sufferings. From the clouds that had concealed him, he issues



forth in all the radiance of immortality, declared to be the Son of God with power, by the Spirit of holiness, in his resurrection from the dead. An angel descends, and rolls away the door of the sepulchre, and sits in glory upon it; and shakes the ground; and causes the Roman guards to flee for fear. His disciples are re-animated and re-assembled, to whom, also, he shewed himself alive, after his passion, by many infallible signs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of things pertaining to the kingdom of God. See him ascend into heaven, far above all principality and power, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. Were there glories on the day of Pentecost? *He* shed forth that which was seen and heard. He filled the Apostles with the Holy Ghost, according to his promise, so that they spake with new tongues, and all the people heard, in their own language, the wonderful works of God. And three thousand were converted under one sermon. All the miracles his servants performed were done in his Name, and were rays of his glory. The establishment of the Gospel then, and the spread of it ever since, and every soul called by grace, is a part of the joy set before him, wherein he sees of the travail of his soul and is satisfied.

And, oh! the glories that are yet to follow—when the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of the Lamb! when he shall sprinkle many nations! when all nations shall fall down before him, and all kings shall serve him! And, oh! the glories that are yet to follow, when his mediation shall be completely accomplished, and he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe:



and attract every eye, and fill every heart, and employ every tongue, for ever!

Saviour Jesus! may I be with thee where thou art, to behold thy glory

## APRIL 10.—EVENING.

“Because I live, ye shall live also.” JOHN xiv. 19.

WE are seldom sufficiently struck with individual importance. We are all in a state of connexion with, and dependence upon, each other: like the members of the human frame, in which one part cannot say to another, I have no need of thee; and where even those members which seem to be more feeble are necessary to the welfare of the whole body. But there are persons who seem to be the very *life* of the cause or the community to which they belong. Place them in a state of danger, and you awaken a thousand sympathies and anxieties. Remove that monarch, and the extensive empire founded by his valour and skill is crushed at once, or crumbled by degrees to nothing. Remove that minister, and the congregation he has by his talents attracted and formed is divided, diminished, and dispersed. Remove the head of that family, and two tender relations are immediately produced, the widow and the fatherless, and both reduced to perplexity and distress; it may be, to want and oppression. Yet in all these instances the dependence is not absolute, and the consequences admit of much exception and limitation. Empires have flourished when monarchs have fallen. Congregations have continued when ministers have finished their course. Families have been provided for when the husband and father have been taken away—But here is a Being upon

whom hangs all the glory of his Father's house. He is indispensably and infinitely necessary to a multitude which no man can number. Is *he* alive or dead? If he be dead, we are for ever undone. If he be alive, we are safe, we are happy, we are made for eternity! And what is his own language? "Because I live, ye shall live also."

By his life, here, though spoken of as present, because of its nearness and certainty, he means, his life after his resurrection; and to this the Apostle refers when he says, "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Of this life we think comparatively too little, not considering—that it was expedient for *us* that he went away—that he not only died *for* us, but rose again—that he is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour—that he is carrying on in heaven the same cause that brought him down to earth. There will be indeed a close to this at the end of the economy, when he will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, and God shall be all in all: but at present he is leading not only a life of glory, but of office, and will continue applying, on the throne, the redemption he procured on the cross, till he shall appear the second time without sin unto the complete salvation of his people. It would be easy to shew how the life of his people, in their justification, sanctification, and glorification, depends on the living Saviour; but we see, also, that their life is insured and secured by his—"Because I live, ye shall live also."

The certainty of the result is founded in three principles. First, the union subsisting between him and them. Secondly, the claim he has to urge on

their behalf, having suffered and died for them. And, Thirdly, the all-sufficiency he possesses to meet all their exigencies. We cannot infer the safety and welfare of a person merely from the regard of his friend; for, however intensely his friend may love him, he may be unable to succor and defend him. But the ability of the Sa iovisru equal to his readiness to help us. His love passeth knowledge, and has the command of unbounded resources—he is mighty to save—able to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by him. Jacob supposed Joseph was dead: but he was alive, and the prime minister of Egypt, and all the stores of the realm were at his disposal; and because he lived his family lived also. And we have an Intercessor for us, an Advocate with the Father, a relation who loved us so as to bleed and die for us, who has power over all flesh, who has all power in heaven and in earth, and is head over all things unto the Church, which is his body. How can we perish for want while in him all fulness dwells? In what perils can his defence fail us? “Fear not,” says he, “I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”

“How can I die while Jesus lives,  
Who rose and left the dead?  
Pardon and grace my soul receives  
From mine exalted Head.”

## APRIL 11.—MORNING.

“In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree.” ZECH. iii. 10.

THUS Inspiration characterizes the reign of the Messiah—It was to be distinguished by three things.

The First, Is *enjoyment*. The very image is delightful. Vines and fig trees were much prized in the East. They afforded at once delightful fruit for the taste, and refreshing shade from the heat. Persons therefore regaled themselves under their branches and leaves: and thus the expression in time came to signify happiness. And what said our Lord to his disciples? Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. Because Christians do not run to the same excess of riot with others; and turn their back on the pleasures of sin, and the dissipations of the world; many think they are mopish and melancholy. But blessed are the people that know the joyful sound. It was so in the beginning of the Gospel. Wherever it came, it was received as good news, as glad tidings; and it was said of the receivers, that they walked not only in the fear of the Lord, but in the comforts of the Holy Ghost. It not only relieved, but delighted them. It not only tranquillized them, but inspired them with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Have we the same Gospel? Or do we embrace it properly, if, instead of being thus *blessed*, it leaves us in a dungeon of gloom, the victims of sadness, and anxiety, and apprehension?

The Second, Is *liberty*. Slaves and captives did not sit under their vines and fig trees. Nor did proprietors in time of war. When invaded, they were liable to the surprises of the enemy. Then the in-

habitants disappeared from these loved, but no longer safe retreats; and longed for the time when, released from perils and alarms, they should go forth with joy, and repose and refresh themselves again. Therefore, Rab-shakeh, to urge the Jews to a surrender, said, "Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me, and then eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his cistern." Hence we read, There was peace all the days of Solomon; and from Dan to Beer-sheba the people sat every man under his vine and under his fig tree. But a greater than Solomon is here. In "His days shall Israel be saved, and Judah shall dwell safely." What have his subjects to fear? If God be for us, who can be against us? Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Christians may therefore give up themselves to holy confidence. Their souls may dwell at ease. They are free indeed. They are kept by the power of God. They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand. Let them realize this; and feel a peace that passeth all understanding, keeping their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Let them say, "I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation."

The Third, Is *benevolence*. Ye shall *call* every man *his neighbour* under the vine, and under the fig tree. There is nothing like selfishness here—they are anxious that their fellow-creatures should likewise partake of their privileges. There is no envy here—there is no room for it. Here is enough, not only for themselves, but for others—and for all.



And if we are Christians indeed, our happiness, instead of being impaired by the experience of others, will be increased by it. Let us therefore remember the lepers. They had discovered plenty, and were regaling themselves, while their neighbours were perishing with famine in Samaria. But conscience smote them, and "they said one to another, We do not well; this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace; if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us; now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household." Thus the first subjects of Christianity said to the spiritually destitute and dying, "That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ." Cursed be the temper of the elder brother that turned wretched at the tears of joy that bedewed the beard of an aged father, and the ecstasies of a family thrown into transport, at the return and reception of the prodigal. Let me resemble, in every feeling of my soul, those happy beings who rejoice in the presence of God over one sinner that repenteth. Let me invite all that come within my reach, to that mercy which I have found. Let me say, Oh! taste, and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him. And let me do this not only by my lips, but by all my temper, and all my conduct—holding forth the word of life.

## APRIL 11.—EVENING.

“God maketh my heart soft.” Job xxiii. 16.

WE may consider God’s softening the heart three ways. There is a soft heart derived from constitution—Thus he makes the heart soft, as the God of nature. There is a soft heart derived from affliction—Thus he makes the heart soft, as the God of providence. There is a soft heart derived from renovation—Thus he makes the heart soft, as the God of grace.

Let us now attend to the first of these. We are fearfully and wonderfully made; and while there is a general sameness, there is also a remarkable variety in the human race, naturally. It seems strange that any should deny this, and endeavour to account for every variation and inequality from the operation of causes subsequently to birth. Events and circumstances have, unquestionably, a mighty influence in forming the character; and in elevating or depressing, in rousing or checking the powers of the individual; but surely there is some difference previously to the existence or want of excitement and development. We cannot suppose that any similar mode of training would have made Johnson Shakespeare, or Shakespeare Johnson. Some are naturally bold, forward, and loquacious. Others are timid, retreating, and slow of speech. The meal out of which some are kneaded, seems leavened with laudanum; while mercury seems infused into the very frame of others, and they are all vigor and motion. How unimpressible are some! It matters not where they are; all places and all scenes are nearly the same to them; they are insensible to every thing that can strike the senses,

imagination, and passions. But—and you may see it in children—take others, and you find their curiosity is awakened, their fear excited, their hope inflamed, according to the quality of what comes in contact with them; and their feelings respond to every pleasing or painful occurrence.

We are not able to determine physically the cause of this constitutional sensibility; it requires far more knowledge than we possess or can probably acquire. Neither is it necessary to attempt absolutely to decide whether this softness of heart be, upon the whole, desirable or advantageous. We must not, in this case, arraign the sovereign pleasure of God, any more than in our form or our stature, by saying, Why has thou made me thus? Nor should we forget that religion adapts itself to every peculiarity of natural formation and complexion. It has scenery for the imaginative, secrets for the inquisitive, depths for the profound, argument for the reasoning, and facts for the busy and simple; it has active engagements for the daring and zealous; and retirement and gentleness for the meek; it allures some, and some it saves with fear. There is nothing also in the world purely natural, but the Maker of all things has, so to speak, balanced or qualified; levying some tax upon what is admired and envied, and connecting some redeeming quality, or some power of compensation, with every disadvantage. Certain states or qualities, therefore, abstractedly considered, cannot prove how much the subjects of them actually suffer or enjoy.

The tenderness of which we are speaking certainly gives a quickness to the sensations of the individual, so that he admits more misery than another; but he feels also more happiness. Such a man incurs, indeed,

many a pang by his sensibility; but then he is capable of a thousand pleasures which others know not of. He has, indeed, less peace, but more enjoyment; and his exquisite indulgences, with the alternations of sadness, in which, too, *he* often feels a strange kind of satisfaction and luxury, are far better than the stagnant pool, or the dull, unvarying level of dullness and unfeeling sameness. I would rather be a sensitive plant than a fungus. Who would, as a traveller, be cased from head to foot in leather, to escape the inconvenience of a few gnats and briers, and lose the liberty and gratifications of the journey?

All must allow that this sensibility renders the possessor amiable. Men are commonly ashamed of being seen in tears. But true greatness is always tender and sympathetic. Homer, that just observer of nature, makes no scruple to represent Ulysses, his best of men, and Achilles, his bravest of men, frequently weeping. Jonathan and David were the most heroical young men of the age; yet they wept on each other's neck, till each exceeded. Yea we read that the Lord of all wept at the grave of Lazarus. What can equal beauty in tears? The moment a female appears devoid of tenderness, she wants an excellence so essential, that nothing can atone for in her; and though she may possess talent, and retain the dress of the sex, she forfeits the honourable and endeared name of woman.

It will also be acknowledged that this sensibility prepares persons for usefulness. In numberless cases, where the relief and comfort of our fellow-creatures are concerned, many are not excited and constrained to act, because they do not *feel*.



## APRIL 12.—MORNING.

“God maketh my heart soft.” JOB xxiii. 16.

THERE is a soft heart derived from affliction. Thus God maketh the heart soft, as the God of providence.

To this, Job immediately refers. “For God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me, because I was not cut off before the darkness, neither hath he covered the darkness from my face.”

Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward. But we shall not enlarge upon the multitude and variety; the sources, kinds, and degrees of human sufferings in this vale of tears. And we shall turn away as soon as possible from those who seem insensible under their trials, and despise the chastening of the Lord. When God strikes them, they strike again; and repair in their calamity to places of sin or dissipation, to drown all sense of sorrow. Of this temper, were those of whom Jeremiah complained: “Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.” The judgments of God which befall some men are like blows inflicted upon wild beasts, which, instead of taming, enrage them the more. Isaiah describes some incorrigible rebels as saying, in their pride and stoutness of heart, “The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones; the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars.” And we read that Hiel, the daring re-builder of Jericho, not only disregarded the threatening of Joshua, but even when one half of it was fulfilled, he went on still in his trespasses, and



having "laid the foundation thereof in Abiram, his first-born, set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub." Thus many, if not verbally, yet practically, express a determination to proceed in an evil course, notwithstanding obvious and repeated discouragements and checks thrown in their way. Ahab was reduced very low, "yet in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord." And God brands him with infamy, that all future ages may know that this was the desperate wretch, who, when the Edomites, and the Philistines, and the Assyrians were upon him, even then he provoked a greater adversary than all, and would fight against God. "This is that king Ahab." And is even this a peculiar case? Can nothing of this kind deservedly stigmatize you? "This is the man who, when desolated in his circumstances, bereaved of his connections, and more than once the subject of disease, instead of humbling himself under the mighty hand of God, waxed worse and worse, and proceeded from evil to evil."

But in a general way, when people come into trouble, they feel, feel seriously and softened. But what is the result? It is threefold. First—It often wears off, and the effect produced is like the morning cloud and early dew that passeth away. O what a difference has there frequently been between the same persons in sickness and health! They "howled upon their beds." "They poured out a prayer when his chastening hand us upon them." O "let my soul live and it shall praise thee." And "spare me a little longer." "I will not offend any more." And they added to their prayer confessions, resolves, and vows. But no sooner were they raised up and set free, than they returned again to folly, and endeavoured to drive from

their minds the remembrance of what could only charge them with inconsistency, and clothe them with shame. Pharaoh after every plague cried, I have sinned; entreat the Lord for me; but when there was respite he hardened his heart.

Secondly—As this softening is frequently transient, so it is sometimes fatal. It seems indeed wonderful that those who know nothing of the grace of God, should often bear their troubles as they do; and that they are not always driven by the heavy pressure of anguish to distraction or despair. And so it is with not a few. They droop and sink in the day of adversity; and are swallowed up of over much sorrow. They verify the words of the Apostle; "The sorrow of the world worketh death"—It deprives them of reputation, subjects them to contempt, deprives them of support, preys upon their health, breaks down their spirits: and the sufferer gradually drops into the grave, or by self-destruction is hurried from the evils of time into those of eternity—for whatever he endured here was only the beginning of sorrows. Oh how desirable is it when the heart is wounded to apply to it the balm of Gilead! and when it is softened to give it the impression of heaven! And

Thirdly—This is sometimes the case, and the heart by suffering is softened to purpose, and the man can say with David, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." As therefore when I see the smith putting a bar of iron into the fire, I conclude he is going to work upon it, and form it for some useful purpose, which could not be done while it was cold and hard; so I always look prayerfully and hopefully towards a man when the Lord brings him into trouble. Manasseh in his distress sought the God of his father, and

found him. The famine made the Prodigal think of home, and he was starved back into a return. The Grecian said, I should have been lost had I not been lost. And there are those now living who can say, I should have been poor had I not been impoverished. The darkening of my earthly prospects made me long after a better country, that is an heavenly. Ah! happy unkindnesses and treacheries that said, "Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide"—it was you that induced me to say, "Therefore will I look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me." Ah! vain world—

"Your streams were floating me along,  
Down to the gulf of black despair;  
And while I listened to your song,  
Your streams had e'en conveyed me there.

"Lord, I adore thy matchless grace,  
That warn'd me of that dark abyss;  
That drew me from these treacherous seas,  
And bid me seek superior bliss.

"Now to the shining realms above,  
I stretch my hands, and glance mine eyes;  
O for the pinions of a dove,  
To bear me to the upper skies!

"There, from the bosom of my God,  
Oceans of endless pleasures roll—  
*There* would I fix my *last* abode,  
*And drown the sorrows of my soul."*

## APRIL 12.—EVENING.

“God maketh my heart soft.” JOB xxiii. 16.

THERE is a soft heart derived from renovation. Thus he makes the heart soft, as the God of grace.

Of this the Lord speaks in the new covenant—“I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.” There cannot be a greater contrast than between these substances as to feeling—but the heart before conversion is stone; and after conversion, flesh. Sin hardens the heart, and whatever tenderness there may be in it with regard to other things, it has none towards the things of the Spirit, till the renewing of the Holy Ghost. But when grace makes the heart soft, it will appear in the following effects.

It will melt with sorrow for sin. Many are afraid of hell: but they are not affected with the sin that leads to it. Sin is the last thing some people think of; but it is the first thing with the penitent—“My sin is ever before me.” And this is the case even in affliction, even then sin oppresses more than trouble. This is the burden too heavy for him to bear. After the loss of an only son, a good woman once said, “Under this loss I have shed many tears for my son, but many more for my sin.” Thus Ephraim was heard bemoaning himself; and what was the subject of his complaint? Not his suffering—but his incorrigibleness under it: “Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke—I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth—Turn thou me and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God.” And

what is the Divine promise? “I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.” And repentance never flows so freely, and we never so much sorrow after a godly sort, as when we are led to the cross and view the Saviour dying not only by us but for us.

When the heart is made soft, it will be pliant to the word of truth. An instance of this is mentioned in the experience of Josiah—“Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the Lord.” It is the general character of the subjects of Divine grace that they “tremble at his word.” The sinner sits before among the threatenings of God, as Solomon sat among his twelve lions unalarmed because they were dead. But faith enlivens them and makes them roar; and he now cries, “What must I do to be saved?” Yet we are not to imagine that he feels the Divine menaces only; the promises so exceedingly great and precious equally awaken his apprehensions. Oh! says he, if I miss them and come short at last! How many feelings will the reading of one chapter, or the hearing of one sermon, excite in the soul of such a man! The Bible is his only rule, and his only judge. He dares not trifle with its contents. He dares not question its declarations. He yields himself to its authority without asking how can these



things be : and receives with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save the soul.

If the heart be made soft, we shall be compassionate towards others. Are our fellow-creatures in penury? We shall have bowels and mercies : and not say, Go in peace ; be ye warmed, and be ye filled ; while we give them not such things as are needful for the body. Are their souls desolate within them ? We shall weep with them that weep. Are they in ignorance ? In meekness we shall instruct them. Have they fallen ? In meekness we shall endeavour to restore them : hating the sin, but pitying the sinner. Have they offended and injured us ? We shall not be revengeful or implacable ; but tender-hearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us.

Such a heart is also very sensible of the Divine goodness. The man, instead of complaining of what he wants, wonders at what he possesses and enjoys. He feels that he is unworthy of the least of all His mercies. What claims have I upon Him ? I was a poor blind creature, but he has opened mine eyes. I was naked, and he clothed me. I was a child of wrath, and he has made me an heir of glory. What shall I render ? Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

A man whose heart God has made tender will be alive to his glory. He will mourn to hear his name blasphemed, and to see his Gospel despised. He will be sorrowful for the solemn assembly, and the reproach of it will be his burden. He will be holily fearful lest he should grieve his Holy Spirit, or cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of. His glory will touch every spring of action in his soul ; and he will be daily asking the Lord what wilt thou have me to do ?

O what a blessing is such a heart as this ! It is bet-

ter than thousands of gold and silver. It prepares for all the manifestations of Divine love; and it insures them.

Who feels a hard heart? The very feeling shews some sensibility. Who longs for a soft one? Let him ask of God, who is more ready to hear than we are to pray, and who "despiseth not the prayer of the destitute."

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## APRIL 13.—MORNING.

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." ROM. iii. 24.

HERE we have an answer to the most important and interesting of all inquiries—"How shall man be just with God?"

To be justified is to be acquitted from the charge brought against us, and absolved from the condemnation with which we were threatened. With regard to us, the condemnation was deserved, and the charge was true. This renders the case so difficult and peculiar; and calls for the Apostle's development.

But, in exposing the source of the privilege, he seems to use a tautology—"Being justified *freely by his grace*." If it be done freely, it must be of grace: and if it be gracious, it must be free. Yet this is not saying too much. Paul knew that men were proud, and vain; and that, as Simon Magus thought of purchasing the Holy Ghost with money, so they, in dealing with God about their souls, wish to be merchants rather than suppliants; and would seem to buy, while they are compelled to beg. But, surely, if it be not saying too much, it is saying enough. Surely after

this, the freeness and graciousness of the thing cannot be questioned. It is not only free and gracious, as opposed to constraint, but as opposed to worthiness. Merit in a sinner, is impossible—*his* desert lies all on the other side. *There* he is worthy—and worthy of death. A man, who asks a favour, may have no claim upon you; but you may also have no demand upon him; and, therefore, though you may justly refuse him, yet you have no right to apprehend, and punish him. But God had a right to punish, and destroy *us*; and it is of his mercies that *we* are not consumed. It is also free and gracious, as opposed to *desire*. This is undeniable, with regard to the constitution and accomplishment of the plan itself—for these long preceded even our being. But is it true, with regard to the application of it? The Publican prayed, “God be merciful to me a sinner:” and went down to his house justified. And you sought, and found. But what induced you to seek? A sense of your want of the blessing. But how came you to feel this, after being so long insensible of it? Hearing such a preacher. But who made this preacher, and sent him, and placed him in your way, and applied what he said to your heart?—And the same may be asked with regard to any other instrumentality. Go as far back as you please; when you arrive, you will find Him there before you, with all his preparations and excitements; and will hear him say, as you approach, “Come, for all things are now ready.”

But the Apostle tells us of the medium of the privilege—“Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” And it is obvious *he* did not deem this inconsistent with the former. He knew that it was still freely by his grace. It was with God to determine

whether the law should take its course, or the penalty be transferred to the surety: for the sentence was, "The soul that sinneth *it* shall die." It was, therefore, an instance of his sovereign grace to admit a substitute. Besides, if he required reparation, he himself provided the lamb for a burnt offering. Herein "God hath commended his *love* towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us:" and hence the exclamation, "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." We have an illustration of this in the case of Job's friends. They had displeased God; and yet he was willing that they should be reconciled. *He* therefore ordered a proceeding that should be available: "Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly." The sacrifice, and the intercession of Job, did not *dispose* God to shew them mercy, for he prescribed them; but they were the way in which he chose to exercise it. And thus, "*He* laid on him the iniquities of us all." "*He* made him, who knew no sin, to be a sin-offering for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." This redemption, therefore, is the effect of his goodness. He loved his own Son, *because* he laid down his life for us; and highly exalted him, *because* he was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.

We cannot say too much of God's mercy—this is the origin of all our hopes. But, surely, he had a right to determine the way in which it should be extended towards those who had no claims upon it: and of the

propriety of the way, both with regard to himself, and also with regard to us, he was the only competent judge. And, therefore, if he has appointed a way, and revealed it in his word; ignorance, pride or rebellion, only, can lead us to oppose or neglect it; and wretchedness and ruin must be the sure result of it. If we could not see the reasonableness of the dispensation, yet, if He has declared that it "became him," we should be bound to acquiesce and adore. But we can see that he has herein abounded towards us, in all wisdom and prudence; that here, mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other; that the law is magnified, and made honorable; that sin is condemned in the flesh; that God is just, while he justifies the ungodly who believeth in Jesus; and that every end that could have been answered by the destruction of the sinner has been equally—better—infinately better answered by the death of the Saviour.

And now what wait we for? We are accepted in the Beloved. Let us come in his Name. Let us draw near in full assurance of faith. Let us joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. And let us not conceal, but zealously and gladly make known the blessedness that has brought us into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.



## APRIL 13.—EVENING.

“Upon one stone shall be seven eyes.” ZECH. iii. 9.

THE Lord Jesus is often called a stone; and seldom without some attribute of distinction. Thus Peter calls him, “A living stone;” and Isaiah, “A tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation.” And here the use of him is announced. He is the basis to sustain the complete salvation of the Church of God, which is his house; his temple. Of such a structure how great would be the fall! The crash would be heard beyond the stars. But what can bear up for ever the weight of such an edifice? Our worthiness, and works? Our righteousness, and strength? Better would the sliding sand, the leaf of autumn, the down of the thistle, support St. Paul’s Cathedral, or one of the pyramids of Egypt, or the pillars of the earth. But He is infinitely equal to the importance of his station; and whoso believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

But let us observe the notice He was to excite and engage—Upon one stone shall be seven eyes. Seven is not to be taken here literally. It is what the Jews call a perfect number; and is designed to indicate a great multitude. Thus God says, if ye walk contrary to me, I also will walk contrary to you, and will punish you seven times for your iniquities; that is, often and severely. Shall I forgive my brother, says Peter, until seven times?

Let us look at a *little* of the accomplishment.—The eye of God was upon him. No finite understanding can conceive the complacency He had in contemplating him, while achieving the redemption of his people,

and finishing the work that was given him to do—"In whom," says He, "my soul delighteth."

—We read of an innumerable company of angels—The eyes of these were upon him. He was seen of angels. They announced, and carolled his birth. They ministered to him in the wilderness.

"Through all his travels here below  
They did his steps attend ;  
Oft gaz'd and wonder'd where at last  
The scene of love would end.

"Around the bloody tree  
They press'd, with strong desire  
That wond'rous sight to see—  
The Lord of Life expire :  
And, could their eyes have known a tear,  
Had dropp'd it there in sad surprise."

—The eye of Satan was upon him. He watched him through life, hoping to make a prey of him, as he had done of the first Adam. But here was the Lord of heaven. And he found nothing in him.

—The eyes of men were upon him. Simeon saw him, and wished to see nothing else. *Blind* Bartimæus saw *him*, and followed him in the way. Judas saw him closely, for three years, and confessed that he had betrayed innocent blood. Pilate saw him judicially, and said, I am pure from the blood of that just man. The Centurion watched him in death, and said, This man was the Son of God. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned. Mary, his mother, was standing by the cross—*She* saw him; and what were her emotions when she viewed the head, that had oft reposed upon her bosom, fall upon his shoulder, and yielding up the ghost! After his

resurrection, then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. Have not I seen Christ? says Paul: yes; and even at mid-day he shone above the brightness of the sun.

—And, how many thousands and millions have seen him since!—not with the eye of the body, but of the mind; not with the eye of sense, but of faith. Indeed this is the grand essential: “He that seeth the Son and believeth on him, hath everlasting life.” The one single design of the Gospel and all the ordinances of religion, is to bring the eyes of men to fix upon him; for there is salvation in no other. He, therefore, cries, “Behold me! behold me!” Every minister endeavours only to awaken attention to him, saying, with John, “Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!”

—Ah! Christians, it is your grief, not that you are so little known and regarded, but that so few eyes are upon him. But more are viewing him than you are aware of. And, soon, Jews shall look upon him whom they have pierced; and Gentiles shall come to his light, and kings to the brightness of his rising. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him, and all nations shall serve him.

—And, in another world, he is all in all. There he draws every eye, and employs every tongue. There his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face, and his Name shall be on their forehead. Oh, glorious hope! It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but this we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him: for we shall SEE HIM AS HE IS.

## APRIL 14.—MORNING.

“The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen.” LAM. iv. 20.

THE words are spoken of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah. And two things are to be noticed and improved. First, How his people regarded him—they called him “The breath of their nostrils.” That is, he seemed as dear and necessary, as the air they respired. How prone are we to make too much of creatures! To love them properly, is a duty; to over-value them, is folly and sin. Yet even Christians are in danger of this; according to the Apostle John—“Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” And who can cast stones at Zedekiah’s subjects? Is there no being who is the breath of our nostrils? Have we never made flesh our arm? Never said of a child, “This same shall comfort us”? Never called gold our hope?—What is all sin, but a departure from God: a transferring of that fear, and confidence, and dependence, and homage to the creature, which are due to the Creator, God over all, blessed for evermore? Religion is nothing but a compliance with the demand—“My son, give *me* thine heart.”

Secondly; observe how he disappointed them. They reposed their trust in him, and expected that under his empire they should enjoy security and happiness among the surrounding nations: “We said of him, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen: but he was taken in their pits,”—Alluding to his unsuccessful effort to escape, when Jerusalem was broken up: “all the men of war fled, and went forth out of the city by night by the way of the gate between

the two walls, which was by the King's garden: but the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho: and all his army was scattered from him. Then they took the king, and carried him up unto the king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath; where he gave judgment upon him." Thus painfully were their hopes deceived; and their idol, instead of defending and blessing them, was himself bereaved, and blinded, and imprisoned for life: "And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes: he slew also all the princes of Judah in Riblah. Then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death." Thus liable are we to disappointment, when we confide in creatures. "The inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came down from the Lord unto the gate of Jerusalem." "Behold," says Hezekiah, "for peace I had great bitterness."

The young are peculiarly exposed here, owing to their ignorance and inexperience. Yet the older are not always wise. But are we not the authors of our own disappointments? We disregard history, and observation, and the word of truth; and look for that from creatures which they are neither designed nor able to afford. There is no assurance of the continuance of any earthly possessions or enjoyments: they are liable to outward violence: they are corruptible in their qualities; they perish in the using.

And there is not only a physical, but a moral uncertainty in their duration: for when we look to them rather than God, God will either take them away, that we may make him the only strength of our heart,



and our portion forever; or, if he leaves them, he will take away the comfort from them, and render them our rebukes. For, whatever we make the means of our forsaking or forgetting God, God will make the instrument of chastising us. We may therefore often read our sin in our sufferings; and it will be well if the remnant of Israel no more shall stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.

Many have had reason to say, It is good for me that I have been afflicted. The dispensation that removed a creature introduced them to the God of all grace: and the Valley of Achor became the door of hope. And so it has been, not only in the commencement, but in the progress of the divine life. The Lord's people have been enriched by their worldly losses; and, in the failures of human dependences, they have taken a fresh hold of his arm, and said, "I will trust, and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." A good man being observed to be as cheerful in adversity as he had been in prosperity, assigned as the reason—when I had everything about me, I enjoyed God in all; and now I have nothing, I enjoy all in God. And happy he, who, when he abounds, can say, with the poet,

"To thee we owe our wealth and friends,  
Our health, and safe abode:  
Thanks to thy Name for meaner things;  
But they are not my God:"

And who, when he is abased, can say, with the Prophet; "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive

shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

## APRIL 14.—EVENING.

"The God of all comfort." 2 Cor. 1. 3.

How much, both as to duty and privilege, depends upon the views we entertain of "him with whom we have to do!" And while born to trouble as the sparks fly upward, and passing through a vale of tears, and feeling even in our best estate some heart's bitterness—for "full bliss is bliss divine;" what can be more encouraging and delightful than to regard him as "THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT?"

And how well does he deserve this beneficent title! Every comfort we have in the creature is from him. If sleep comforts us when we are weary, or food comforts us when we are hungry, it is from his goodness. If, when he sendeth abroad his ice like morsels and none can stand before his cold, we have houses to defend us, raiment to cover us, fuel to warm us, it is from him. When the spring returns, Whose sun calls us to go forth into the fields and garden? Who regales all our senses? Who charms the ear with these melodies? the eye with these colors? the smell with these perfumes? and the appetite with these tastes? Who gives us those benign, and joyous, and grateful sensations which we feel when the lambs sport themselves? and the apple-tree is dressed among the trees of the wood? and the hay appeareth? and the full corn waves in the ear? and the reaper fills his hand, and he that bindeth sheaves his bosom? and

the little hills rejoice on every side? and the year is crowned with his goodness?

Who has not by accident or disease been confined to the chamber of weariness and pain; and who by the sympathies, attentions, and soothings of the tenderest friendship has comforted you upon the bed of languishing, and made all your bed in your sickness? And who when the graves were ready for you, and you said, I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world, who comforted you by the return of ease, the re-glowing of health, the renewal of your strength, the resumption of your liberty—so that all your bones said, “Who is a God like unto thee?”

Has a friend like ointment and perfume rejoiced your heart by the sweetness of his counsel? or has a minister been the helper of your faith and joy? The Lord gave him the tongue of the learned, that he should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. God comforted you by the coming of Titus.

The heathen made idols of every thing that afforded them relief and comfort; and thus they loved and served the creature more than the Creator. Let us not resemble them. Whatever may be the medium of our comfort, God is the only source of it. Thus the instrument, instead of seducing us from God, will be a conductor to him; and the stream will lead us to “the fountain of life.” God will not give his glory to another; and we cannot affront him more than by substituting any thing in the place of him. This will provoke him to strike the idol that robs him of his praise out of the way: or cause him by disappointing us in the moment of application to say, “Am I in God’s stead? If the Lord help thee not, whence should I

help thee?" If we will not make him our trust, he will make that whereon we lean to smite us. He can take comfort out of all our possessions and enjoyments, so that in the midst of our sufficiency we shall be in straits, and with cheerfulness on every side walk in silence and sadness, like a ghost among the tombs. What Job calls his friends, "physicians of no value," "miserable comforters," will apply to all our dependences and expectations separate from God. Even in laughter the heart will be sorrowful. Our successes, like the quails of the Jews, will poison us while they gratify: our prosperity will destroy us: and at the end of our days the fool and the wretch will acknowledge the truth of Jonah's confession, "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercies; salvation is of the Lord."

True comfort is to be found in God only; in the hope of his mercy; in the evidence of his friendship; in the freedom of his service; in the comforts of the Holy Ghost. But they who seek it in him shall not be confounded. He has insured to those who flee for refuge to this hope strong consolation, by a promise confirmed by an oath; and what he promises he is able to perform. Nothing is too hard for the Lord. No depth of distress is below his reach. He can create comfort when there is nothing to derive it from. He can extract it out of the most unlikely materials. He can bring order out of confusion, strength out of weakness, light out of darkness.

Sufferer! think of *Him*! It is his prerogative and delight to "comfort them that are cast down." Why should you faint or despond? Are the consolations of God small with thee? Does not *He* say, "*I*, even *I*, am he that comforteth thee?"

Lord, I believe: help thou my unbelief. “Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth. Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.”

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## APRIL 15.—MORNING.

“Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.” MATT. xxvi. 56.

LET us look at this lamentable fact, in connexion with the disciples, the Saviour, and ourselves.

—With regard to the *disciples*, it shews us their weakness and depravity. They fled, from fear; but their fear was needless. He had stipulated for their safety, when he surrendered himself in the Garden: “If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way; that the saying might be fulfilled, Of them which Thou hast given me, I have lost none.” They were under great obligations to him. He had done much for them in calling them by his grace, and dignifying them with the Apostleship. And he was now going to bleed and die for them. And they had professed a great attachment to him: for when Peter said, Though I should die with thee, I will not deny thee; so said all the disciples. Yet they all forsook him, and fled! Lord, what is man!

Yet this culpable cowardice was overruled for good. For their very declension made their witness, after his resurrection, the more unexceptionably credible; and the weakness of their faith has proved the strengthening of ours. They were not persons of hasty belief. They had doubted, and for the time abandoned the



cause, saying, "We trusted it had been He which should have redeemed Israel:" and were repairing to their former homes and callings. What could have rallied them, and brought them back, and inspired them with courage to go forth, and bear reproach, and persecution, and death, and his Name, but a conviction that nothing could resist?

—With regard to the *Saviour*, this was a part, and a very trying part, of his abasement and passion. A friend is born for adversity. Then his presence, his sympathy, his countenance, is peculiarly desirable and necessary. Common humanity says, To him that is afflicted, pity should be shewed of his friend—But *he* looked for some to take pity, and there was none, and for comforter, and he found none. These men had been three years with him: they could have borne witness to his freedom from sedition; his innocence; his piety. They could have cheered him by their standing at his side; and their determination to suffer with him. But one betrayed him; another denied him; and all forsook him, and fled. Behold, and see, if ever there was sorrow like unto his sorrow!—Yet he foresaw and foretold this: "The hour cometh, and is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone." This enhanced his anguish. He suffered in the apprehension, as well as in the reality. But it also enhanced his love. He was not drawn into any part of his suffering by ignorance or surprise—he knew all—all was before him—but he turned not his back.

—With regard to *ourselves*, it may teach us not to sink, or wonder, if we should be deserted by those from whom we had reason to look for better things. Did not one tell David, "Behold, Ahithophel is among

the conspirators with Absalom!" And did not he groan—"It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me: then I would have hid myself from him. But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company"? Did not Job complain, "My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks they pass away; which are blackish by reason of the ice and wherein the snow is hid: what time they wax warm, they vanish; when it is hot, they are consumed out of their place"? Did not Paul say—"At my first answer, no man stood by me, but all men forsook me—I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge"? Above all, "lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds," consider the Lord Jesus. Is the servant above the master? or the disciple above his Lord?

## APRIL 15.—EVENING.

"Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." PSALM li. 11.

WE may see what David prized by what he deprecates. There were many calamities at the thought of which his heart might have trembled. He could remember how God for his disobedience had punished his predecessor Saul, and had rent the kingdom from him. He knew how God by Nathan had threatened himself; and he could not help feeling the announcement, that the child should die and the sword never depart from his house. Yet he does not say, Oh, let me escape the rod—do not deprive me of my throne—or

involve my family in trouble and disgrace. This is what many would have implored. But David prays, "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh: and thus it is with men of the world; they are satisfied as long as their friends and health, their corn and wine, abound. Tell them of the hidnig of God's countenance, and the loss of the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and they know not your meaning, and are ready to treat you with scorn or pity. They judge of every thing by a fallacious standard. "Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the Lord understand all things." *They* weigh every claim in the balance of the sanctuary. They walk by faith and not by sight. No evils therefore appear to them like those which regard the welfare of the soul and eternity.

And their judgment is founded in truth. The most awful evils are spiritual evils. And these are more peculiar to the dispensation under which we live. Temporal judgments were common under the law, when offenders were often punished immediately, sensibly, visibly. We see this in the case of Lot's wife, Miriam, Uzzah, and many others recorded in the Old Testament. But under the Gospel inflictions are more spiritual. Here men are given up to a hard heart, a reprobate mind, a seared conscience; to vile affections; to strong delusion; to believe a lie. The spirit of slumber falls upon them. The word and ordinances of religion become barren and unprofitable. By the fascinations of error they are so bewitched that they cannot obey the truth. Yet they are easy. For these are judgments that do not alarm; it is the very nature of them to stupify. Oh! it would be a thou-

sand times better to lose all your substance and beg your bread from door to door; a thousand times better to be robbed of health, and never enjoy another hour of ease; than for God thus to punish you. And though you will not and ought not to pray for sufferings absolutely, if you are like-minded with David, you will be willing that God should deal with you in any way rather than say, "He is joined to idols, let him alone"—And this will be your most earnest prayer: "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

But was David in danger of this? We do not like to get rid of an apparent difficulty by denying a revealed truth. And such appears to us the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints. We are therefore confident of this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in them will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Yet, first, the effect deprecated may take place in a measure and degree. God was provoked to leave Hezekiah in the business of the ambassadors of Babylon, and it shewed what was in his heart. And God may be so grieved as to suspend the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and all joy and peace in believing. And, secondly, by yielding to temptation, a partaker of Divine grace may be reduced to such a state of darkness, and horror, and anguish, as to apprehend God's entire abandonment of him for ever. This was David's case. His fall had broken his bones, closed his lips, deprived him of the joy of God's salvation, and made him fear that he was cut off from before his eyes.

Such an evil and bitter thing is it to sin against God. So surely will our backslidings reprove us. If his children walk not in my judgments, then will I visit their transgression with the rod. Nevertheless my

lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. The way to walk comfortably is to walk consistently. I am always sorry to see some professors so calm and happy as they are. With their levity of temper, and vain conversation, and worldly conformities, and neglect of the means of grace—*were* they the Lord's people, surely he would shew that they are not walking so as to please him. Them that honour me, I will honour. Blessed is the man that feareth always.

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## APRIL 16.—MORNING.

"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."

JOHN xiv. 18.

THESE tender words are part of our Saviour's farewell address to his disciples, immediately after the Holy Supper.

We see in them his kindness. These disciples had shewn many defects, and had very little improved any of their advantages; but loving his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end. They were now going to prove themselves very unworthy: and he foresaw, and foretold, what, according to their present views and feelings, seemed perfectly incredible to themselves—that they would all forsake him in the hour of trial, notwithstanding their obligations and professions. They were going to leave *him* comfortless, as far as it depended upon them; and to induce him to complain—"I looked for some to take pity, and there was none, and for comforter, and I found none." But—much as they deserved it—"I will not," says he, "leave *you* comfortless." "I will"—not to



punish or upbraid, but to relieve and encourage—"I will come to you."

Here, also, we perceive his greatness. When we are going away from our connexions to some distant place, we may speak of our return; but it must be conditionally. We are not sure of the event; it does not depend upon us; and we ought always to say, "If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that." But when we die, we know our return is impossible; and our friends know it, and weep most of all that they will see our faces no more. The dying pastor cannot say to his anxious flock, I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you, and again feed you with the Bread of Life. The dying father cannot say to his family, mourning around his bed, I will come again and provide for you. One of the most touching circumstances in the beautiful lines of Cowper, on his mother's picture, is the delusion employed to comfort him—

"Thy maidens, grieved themselves at my concern,  
Oft gave me promise of thy quick return—  
What ardently I wish'd I long believ'd;  
And, disappointed still, was still deceived.  
By disappointment every day beguiled,  
Dupe of to-morrow even from a child—  
Thus many a sad to-morrow came and went,  
Till, all my stock of infant sorrow spent,  
I learn'd at last submission to my lot;  
But though I less deplored thee, ne'er forgot."

And—the same lesson we must all learn with regard to every dear delight we here enjoy. The departing Joseph said unto his brethren, "I die; and God will surely visit you!" He does not say, I will visit you—he knew he was going the way whence he could not return. But Divinity *here* speaks, as well as friend-

ship. "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." This is the language, not only of foreknowledge, but of sovereign dominion: the language of one who had the keys of hell, and of death: of one who said, No man taketh my life from me; I lay it down of myself—I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. Even death would not interrupt his goodness. His entering another world would not affect his intercourse with his people in this. His presence with them was not confined to his bodily residence. While on earth, he said, "The Son of man who is in heaven." And now, though in heaven, he is no less on earth. Lo! said he, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.

—And can we help perceiving, here, how indispensable he is to the happiness of his people? The disciples were comfortless in the view of his absence; and it is easy to account for this, both from their attachment to him, and from the pleasure and profit they had derived from him. We feel, and tremble, and groan, at parting with a friend, or relation. What must the feelings of the disciples have been, at the thought of losing *him*! They would be left in the world, like sheep without their shepherd; like travellers in a wilderness, without their guide; like orphans, bereaved of the father's care, and the mother's bosom. And what could comfort them, but the promise of *himself* again? Had he said, I will not leave you comfortless, I will send you riches, and honours; princes shall be your friends, and angels your servants—what would all this have been, without the assurance, "*I* will come to you"? But this is sufficient. Here is a resource equal to the exigency; a consolation adequate to all the distress.

The good found in creatures is always finite, and very limited. It is also much dispersed, so that we must apply to many, to contribute their part to make up one comfort. The happiness we derive from creatures is like a beggar's garment—it is made up of pieces and patches, and is worth very little after all. But the blessedness we derive from the Saviour is single, and complete. In him all fulness dwells. He is coeval with every period. He is answerable to every condition. He is a physician, to heal; a counsellor, to plead; a king, to govern; a friend, to sympathize; a father, to provide. He is a foundation, to sustain; a root, to enliven; a fountain, to refresh. He is the shadow from the heat; the bread of life; the morning star; the sun of righteousness—all, and in all. No creature can be a substitute for him; but he can supply the place of every creature. He is all my salvation, and all my desire. My hope, my peace, my life, my glory, and joy.

Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but Thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. I cannot be exposed; I cannot be friendless; I cannot be poor; I cannot be fearful; I cannot be sorrowful—with Thee.

“If thou, my Jesus, still art nigh,  
Cheerful I live, and cheerful die;  
Secure, when mortal comforts flee,  
To find ten thousand worlds in Thee,”

APRIL 16.—EVENING.

“Ye were as sheep going astray.” 1 PET. ii. 25.

THE words seem to be, if not a quotation from, yet an allusion to the language of Isaiah—“All we like

sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way." If there be truth in this supposition, two things are asserted by the Prophet which are not repeated by the Apostle. The one is, the *universality* of the charge—*All* we like sheep have gone astray. There is no difference between Jew and Greek. The Scripture has proved all under sin. The other is, the *diversification* of the depravity—We have turned every one to his *own* way. Though all are guilty, each has some particular iniquity to which he is attached, by his constitutional complexion or his outward circumstances. And here it is that many are deluded. They flatter themselves by comparison, and are satisfied because they are free from some crimes chargeable upon others ; not considering that they also are wanderers, only in another road. A straight line is always the same ; but there are millions of crooked ones. There was only one ark by which any could be saved ; but there were numberless abysses in which they could be drowned. Nothing, says a good writer, is more lamentable, than to hear people who are all wrong disputing among themselves which is right. Yet this is common. But the lover of pleasure and the lover of gold ; the profligate and the pharisaical ; the open offender and the close hypocrite ; the superstitious Papist and the formal Protestant, are all in the same condition with regard to their safety. Let us remember that the Scripture is our only rule of judgment, and that it matters not what we think of ourselves, or others think of us—if we are destitute of faith in Christ and true holiness. "He that believeth not the Son hath not life;" and, "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

The words are a metaphor ; a metaphor often used



by the sacred writers, and therefore just and pertinent. Indeed nothing can be more significant of the danger and misery of a sinner than a strayed sheep. The welfare of the sheep depends on the care of the shepherd. If they wander beyond his protecting arm, they are liable to be destroyed by beasts of prey, or if they leave his pasturage they are likely to perish for want of food: for though they can go astray of themselves, they cannot defend themselves nor provide for themselves, or of themselves find their way back. They are therefore lost unless sought after. The metaphors of the Scripture, however, though strong in their allusion, are often only partial. But they are more forcible by being limited; for by stretching a comparison to reach every thing, we weaken it as well as render it ridiculous. Sheep in going astray are not guilty; but they would be criminal, and deserving all they suffered, if they were possessed of reason, and after having been under the superintendence of the kindest shepherd, and allowed to want no good thing, they should knowingly abandon him, and wilfully incur every kind of peril and wretchedness. And is not this the emblem of our conduct? Did not God make man upright? Did not the inspiration of the Almighty give him understanding? Was he not placed in a condition of safety, peace, and happiness? Was he not fenced in by Divine commands? apprized of the consequences of going astray? and warned against them?—Yet astray he went!

And thus we reach the fact which the words were intended to express—the natural state of men as alienated from the life of God—They are as sheep going astray. They go astray from their duty to God. Thus they forsake him as their Lord and owner. As



he made them, and gave them all their powers, possessions, and enjoyments, they are bound to serve and obey him: but they prefer their own will to his authority, and live in the violation of his laws which are all holy, and just, and good. They go astray from their happiness *in* God. Thus they forsake him as their portion, following after rest and satisfaction apart from the Supreme good. All wish for happiness; but where do they naturally seek it? In the pleasures of sin, in the dissipations of the world, in science, fame, riches, power, friendship. They do not seek it in the favour, the image, the presence, the service of God. They wish to be happy without God. They ask, "Who will shew us any good?" but do not pray, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us"—If ever they go to God, it is when fear or affliction urges them. Do they delight themselves in the Almighty? Do they always call upon God? They go astray from their recovery *by* God. Thus they forsake him as their Saviour; who, instead of abandoning them when they departed from him, remembered them in their low estate, and provided means the most suitable and adequate for their restoration. He spared not his own Son, but gave him up as a propitiation for their sins. He sends them the Gospel; beseeches them by his ministers; and urges the message by a thousand motives—But they make light of it: they turn away from him that speaketh, and neglect so great salvation. Yea they oppose it; and if ever they think of returning to God it is by a way of their own devising in preference to his. They go about to establish their own righteousness instead of submitting themselves to the righteousness which is of God; and act in their own strength instead of being strong in the

grace that is in Christ Jesus; thus frustrating him in his greatest design, and robbing him of his highest glory.

Reflect upon each of these: and remember, Christian, this was once your own state. Look back; and acknowledge that ye yourselves also were once foolish and disobedient. But *after* this the lovingkindness of God our Saviour towards you appeared. If you are justified, you were once condemned: if alive, you were once dead: if found, you were once lost. How happy that you can be addressed as those who were once going astray, but are *now* returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls!

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## APRIL 17.—MORNING.

“Behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts.” ZECH. iii. 9.

THIS is spoken of the stone, upon which were to be seven eyes, and which intends the Messiah, the foundation laid in Zion.

To engrave, is to pierce and cut. When he became a man of sorrows; when he said, Reproach hath broken my heart; when he gave his back to the smiters, and his cheek to them that plucked off the hair; when the crown of thorns entered his temples, and the nails his hands and feet, and the spear his side—then, O my soul, was this Scripture fulfilled.

As there is no engraving without wounding, so to engrave is to embellish and beautify. And he was made perfect through suffering. Hence, “I do cures,” said he, “to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.” Hence he calls the season

of his passion the hour in which he was to be "glorified." Hence he adds, "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." And the richest display of his graces; and the acquirement of the dispensation of the Spirit; and the dominion he exercises in our nature; and the prerogative of judging the world in righteousness; and the praises he will inhabit through eternal ages—all these resulted from his sufferings, according to the language of Divine prophecy, and history—"When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." "Because he was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, therefore God hath exalted him, and given him a name above every name."

And as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. To a person unacquainted with the process, the pruning of the tree; the cleaving of the ground with the ploughshare; the operation of the chisel on the stone; would look like an effort to injure or destroy. But view the thing afterwards. Behold the vine, adorned with purple clusters. Survey the field, yielding the blade, the ear, the full corn in the ear. Examine the carved work when the sculptor has achieved his design, and fixed it in the proper place!

—Christians are sometimes perplexed, and discouraged, because of their trials. They know not what God is doing with them. They fear he is angry; and

going to crush and destroy. But they are his workmanship. He is preparing them for their destination in the temple of his grace. These trials are applied to qualify and advance them. They will only perfect that which concerneth them. Howard was taken by the enemy and confined in prison. There he learned the heart of a captive: and this experience originating in his suffering, excited and directed his thoughts, and led him into all his extraordinary course of usefulness and fame. It is good for me, says David, that I have been afflicted. I know, says Paul, that this shall turn to my salvation. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

## APRIL 17.—EVENING.

“He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified.” HEB. ii. 11.

THE Apostle here speaks of Christ and of Christians as concerned in the same work, but differently concerned. He is the agent, they are the subjects—He sanctifieth, and they are sanctified. We are not however to suppose that in this work they are passive; or that he acts upon them as a mechanic operates upon stone and wood, which are insensible and unconscious of the process. He does not sanctify them without their knowledge, and consent, and choice, and exertion. According to his good pleasure he works in them to *will* and to *do*. He makes them the instruments as well as the subjects; and so engages them, that the work is represented as their work as well as his. Hence it is enjoined, as well as promised, and we are called upon to cleanse ourselves



from all filthiness of flesh and spirit; and are assured that he who has the hope of Christ in him purifieth himself even as he is pure.

But there is no inconsistency here. We believe, but he enables us to believe. We exercise repentance, but he gives us repentance unto life. We bear the fruit, but it is the fruit of the Spirit, and in him is all our fruit found—and therefore we are called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that *he* may be glorified.

To sanctify, admits of two imports. The first is separation or setting apart from common to sacred use. Thus the tabernacle and all the vessels of the sanctuary under the law were sanctified. No change took place in their qualities, but only in their appropriation and use—They were sanctified by *consecration*. And there are some who contend that in this sense only we are sanctified by the purpose of God. To plead for a real change of nature, for a growth in grace, or for any thing in ourselves, though not derived from ourselves, is legal, genders to bondage, and obscures the glory of the Gospel. So it was always. Jude tells us of ungodly men who turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness: and James mentions those who relied on a faith without works, and which was dead being alone. This sense of sanctification indeed applies to the people of God, but it involves another. “The Lord hath set apart him that is *godly* for himself.” “God hath from the beginning chosen them to salvation, *through* sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.”

The second meaning therefore is *renovation*—Hence we read of being renewed in the spirit of our minds;



of being made partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the pollutions of the world through lust. There is a real operation in all the subjects of Divine grace which delivers them from the power of darkness; and destroys the love of sin, and renders true holiness their delight and pursuit. Paul therefore says, "Be ye transformed by the renewing of the mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God"—The latter depends upon the former. We cannot be consecrated to God till we are renovated. The reason is, that by nature we are depraved, and have no love to God or concern to please him. But when this Divine change takes place, then what God purposed is actually exemplified, and we dedicate ourselves to him, considering ourselves as no longer our own, and using all we are, and all we have, to his service and in his praise.

Hence sanctification is more than natural amiableness, outward reformation, and mere morality. Morality does not include holiness: but holiness includes morality, and makes provision for it in the surest and noblest way.

Sanctification too is not confined to any particular faculty, but extends to the whole nature of man. We read of being sanctified wholly, body, soul, and spirit. The work is not finished in any part, but it is begun in every part. There is a difference between the operations of art and of life. The progress of the former is successional, the latter simultaneous. The painter or the sculptor while advancing one part of the picture or the statue leaves for the time the rest; but in a flower and a tree the whole goes on at once towards maturity. The child is not a man, but he has all the

lineaments and faculties, and though they are imperfect, they grow together to manhood in due time—So it is with the Christian.

How defective are they in their religious views and concerns who do not look to the Lord Jesus as the Sanctifier as well as the Redeemer! If I wash thee not, says he, thou hast no part in me. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

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## APRIL 18.—MORNING.

“Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.” *MATT. xiii. 33.*

WE may consider the kingdom of heaven, as intending the empire of the Gospel in the world; and also the empire of grace in the heart.

Let us confine our attention to the latter.

The leaven in the meal is a foreign importation. It is not naturally in the meal, nor derived from it. It is the same with Divine grace. Though it resides in us, it does not arise from us: for in our natural state dwelleth no good thing—It is altogether a new production; and so alien is it from the man himself, who is the subject of it, that the introduction of the principle occasions a ferment, or contest, that lasts for life—the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.

The leaven in the meal is active and operating. There it works; and evinces its residence by its agency. And the grace of God—Is this a dead, powerless thing? Is it a notion? Or a principle? We read of the work of faith; the labour of love; the

patience of hope. The same may be said of repentance: "What carefulness it *wrought* in you; yea, what zeal! yea, what revenge!" I will shew thee, says James, my faith by my works: I will shew thee the sun, by its shining; and the spring, by the streams. Faith justifies the soul; but works justify faith, and prove it to be of the operation of God.

The leaven is assimilating. It converts; it changes—not by destroying the substance of the meal, but altering the quality; communicating its own property, tincture, relish. It is the same here. We are transformed by the renewing of the mind. The man remains physically the same as he was before: the same in his relations, talents, condition, business—Yet he is another man; a new man. He is evangelized. He has something of the holy and heavenly nature of divine truth in him. If the grace of God be light, it enlightens him. If salt, it seasons him. If glory, it glorifies him. If leaven, it leavens him.

The operation of the leaven is gradual. The effect in the meal is not produced at once; but by degrees. And do we not read of being renewed day by day? of going from strength to strength? of being changed into the same image, from glory to glory? The work would want the evidence of analogy, if it were instantaneous. In the family we see children becoming young men; and young men becoming fathers. In the field, we see, first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear. Some are not sensible of their religious advancement; and the reason is, they judge by the growing, rather than by the growth. The one escapes us; the other is perceptible.

Were you to stand by the side of the most rapidly growing plant, you would not see it grow; but you

would see when it was grown. Thus judge yourselves, and see whether there is not an increase in your convictions of sin, and the vanity of the world, and the preciousness of the Saviour. Thus look at your dispositions; your dependence; your taste, your diligence; your self-denial, in the service and ways of God.

The influence of the leaven is diffusive. Commencing from the centre, it reaches, in due time, to the extremities, and penetrates every particle of the meal. The grace of God is lodged in the heart; but it is not confined there. It reaches all the powers of the man's mind, and all the senses of his body. It enters all his situations, and circumstances in life. It affects him in the field; in the shop, in the family; in all his connexions; in all his civil and common actions; and whether he eats or drinks, or whatever he does, he does all to the glory of God.

—And, as the leaven ultimately attains its object, and leavens the whole—so here the issue of the grace of God will be universal and complete holiness. It will sanctify us wholly—body, soul, and spirit. It will perfect that which concerneth us. And the result is sure, even now. How small soever the leaven is, compared with the mass, the less will prevail, and subdue the greater. The dawn will chase away the night, and blaze in full day. He which hath begun a good work, will perform it: let us not despise, therefore, the day of small things, either in ourselves or others.

APRIL 18.—EVENING.

“Casting all your care upon him.” 1 PET. v. 7

To understand this injunction two remarks will be necessary.

First, the Apostle refers to cares pertaining to the life that now is. As to the affairs of the life to come, we are not only permitted but required to be careful. Yea, we are commanded to "seek first," that is, before all other things, "the kingdom of God and his righteousness." And it is to enable us to pursue these objects in a manner becoming their importance, that other cares are forbidden. Yet,

Secondly, the Apostle does not design, even in temporal interests, to dispense with a wise use of means and a strict attention to duty. For these are encouraged in other parts of Scripture, and every word of God is pure. "The hand of the diligent maketh fat." "The prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself; but the simple pass on and is punished." "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." Hence also the general caution: "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established." If professors of religion therefore, under a notion of casting all their care upon the Lord, neglect exertion, refuse opportunities of improving their condition, and in their expenses exceed their income, they are tempting God but not trusting in him. And Paul, a very compassionate man, made no scruple to enjoin, "If any will not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. But ye, brethren, be not weary in



well doing." Jacob had to meet his brother Esau who was coming towards him in the fury of revenge. But what does he? He does all that his means would admit, or his prudence could dictate. He divides his company, sends forward a present, and studies a soft answer which turneth away wrath; and *then* retires and casts all his care on him who cared for him, and made even his enemy to be at peace with him.

Why did not his father and mother throw Moses into the river at once? God could have easily preserved him, and the deliverance would have been the more remarkable. But as if every thing depended upon their diligence and precaution, they hide him as long as possible, and then build a little ark, and pitch it within and without, and when the vehicle is left in the flaps, the sister is stationed to watch any favourable issue: and in *doing* this they cast all their care upon him who cared for them, and turned the shadow of death into the morning. Miracles were never mere displays of power; nor ever were they needlessly performed, or exceeding in their degree and extent. Thus our Lord prepared a fish to furnish money for the temple-tax: yet he did not supernaturally transport it through the air, and lay it upon the table; but ordered Peter to go to the sea and cast in his hook. And when the angel had done what was really out of Peter's power, opened the iron gates and loosened his fetters, he yet told him to put on his sandals and mantle, and follow him; for this he *could* do; and why should the angel have carried him forth in his arms or on his shoulder?

But though you are not to cast your *work* upon the Lord, you are to cast your *care*. For though duty is yours, events are his. But when you have diligently

and properly used the means, you are not to be of a doubtful mind, or to yield to fretfulness and impatience; but to commit your way unto the Lord, and leave the concern with him. If we go forward into the world of imagination, and busy ourselves about contingencies, we invade the Lord's province, and weary ourselves for very vanity. Who by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? But he can take away one. He can injure himself though he cannot benefit. The sin brings its own punishment along with it. Our anxiousness hurts our health, our temper, our peace of mind, our fitness for duty and devotion. What a wretched burden it is! Well, whatever makes up the depression, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." But how is this to be done? We are to cast all our care upon him two ways. First, by prayer. "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God." "Is any afflicted? Let him pray." Oh what a relief!

Secondly, by faith—A firm and influential belief of his providential agency in all our concerns; a persuasion that all his ways towards us are mercy and truth; an assurance that all things work together for good to them that love God. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." But who has faith enough for this? Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

## APRIL 19.—MORNING.

“For he careth for you.” 1 Pet. v. 7.

WHATEVER the world may think, religion is wisdom: and requires nothing of its followers but a “reasonable service.” The privileges of a Christian are not baseless fancies: his repentance is not an ignorant sorrow; his trust in God is not a blind presumption. He is able to give a reason of the hope that is in him; and he can justify his practice as well as his expectation.

How simple and satisfactory is the motive or argument here adduced to enforce the duty enjoined: “Casting all your care upon him—*for he careth for you!*” Our affairs cannot be left to negligence and uncertainty—Some one must manage them; and care for us. Now opposed to our own care is the care of God! And how much better is the one than the other! Our care is unavailing and unprofitable. And how little can we add to it from any relative resource! A friend is indeed born for adversity; and such a benefactor, by counselling us in our doubts, comforting us in our sorrows, and relieving us in our necessities, is one of the greatest blessings Heaven can bestow. Yet how limited as well as uncertain is human friendship! All reliance on creature help is leaning on a broken reed, or hewing out broken cisterns that can hold no water. But “blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh; but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yield

ing fruit." Here is a Divine friend and helper. *He* careth for us—Here is the case of a God engaged for us—That is, of a Being possessed of infinite perfections. Here is a care attended by unerring knowledge; by almighty power; by a goodness, a kindness, a tenderness, a patience, a fidelity, that knows no bounds. Surely all these advantages combined in him who careth for us, must render his care all-sufficient for every purpose, and discharge our minds from every solicitude.

But what evidence have we that he *does* care for us? The fact is certainly astonishing; and when we reflect upon God's majesty and holiness, and our meanness and unworthiness, we may well exclaim, with David, "Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him!" Or, with Job, "What is man that thou shouldest magnify him; that thou shouldest set thy heart upon him; that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment!" Yet nothing is more true. It is involved in the first essential principle of religion, and upon which all its duties are founded: for "he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." We are commanded to pray to God; but for what purpose, if he takes no interest in our concerns? We are required to bless and praise him; but for what reason, if he dispenses our blessings by accident, and not from disposition and design? He also takes care for oxen. He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens that cry. He openeth his hand and satisfieth the desire of every living thing. Now we may reason from the less to the greater—And hence the Saviour says to his disciples, "Ye are of more value than many

sparrows." "Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" The relations in which he stands prove the same. If he professes himself to be the Shepherd, the King, the Husband, the Father of his people, will he not care for his sheep, his subjects, his bride, his offspring? His promises are exceeding great and precious, and adapted to all our wants and fears. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry." "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Is not this the language of one that careth for us? Review his doings for proof of this; for as we have heard so have we seen in the city of our God. What says the history of his people in all generations? Who cared for Noah when the Deluge was coming on, and said, Come thou and all thy house into the ark? Who cared for David, and appeared for him in all his dangers and tribulation? Who restrained the lions and the flames that they should not touch Daniel and his companions? Whose angel stood by Paul in the storm, and said, Fear not, Paul, when all hope that they



should be saved was taken away? And what says your own experience? Has he not cared for you from the womb? In childhood? In youth? In manhood? In every period of life? In every condition? In every difficulty? In every distress? And having cared for you so long, will he abandon you now? Having sought you when enemies, will he forsake you now he has made you friends? Having not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for you; will he withhold any good thing from you?

“But if he cared for us, why are we so afflicted?” This, instead of being an objection, furnishes a proof. Your trials evince his care. You are children under discipline—And if you endure chastening, God deal-eth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? “If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.” The husbandman prunes the vine *because* he cares for it, and wishes it to bring forth more fruit. The artificer puts the gold into the furnace *because* he values and wishes to improve it.

How enviable is the portion and experience of Christians! The world indeed knoweth them not. They can only see their outward condition; and because this is often poor and afflicted, they are ready to think that they are miserable and melancholy. But how differently would they think if they could see their inward security and composure—If they could see how they rise above those changes which ruffle and terrify others—If they could see how, while the men of the earth fret, and turmoil, and are devoured by the sorrow of the world that worketh death, they have, even in this vale of tears, an asylum where the wicked

cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding keeps their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus!

But, alas! we often hold forth Christians as they ought to be, rather than as they are. It is lamentable that they do not more fully improve their resources, and live up to their privileges. Hence, that care which they are allowed and commanded to resign, and which their heavenly Father and Friend is more than willing to take upon himself, they retain and even cherish to the spoiling of their comfort; and instead of their dwelling at ease, and being in quiet from the fear of evil, they are ingenious at self-vexation, and suffer in imagination far more than in reality! Lord, humble us—and forgive—and teach us to profit—and lead us in the way that we should choose.

## APRIL 19.—EVENING.

“We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren,” 1 JOHN iii. 16.

IN the beginning of the Gospel this test of love was frequently required; and Christians not only dared to be companions of them that suffered, but were ready to suffer for them. So Paul testifies of Priscilla and Aquila, his helpers in Christ: “Who,” says he, “have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks but also all the churches of the Gentiles.” It is well the providence of God does not call *us* to such a severe trial. But surely the principle requires us to be ready to do *every thing in our power* on their behalf; and will not allow us to refuse any *service or sacrifice* for our brethren, however *arduous*.

We may do much for their minds; by dissipating their doubts, removing their fears, and bringing them

comfort in their spiritual distresses. Thus Jonathan went to David in the wood, and strengthened his hand in God. Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart; so doth a man his friend by hearty counsel. A Christian is self-suspicious, and is afraid of every conclusion in his own favour drawn by himself. He sees not the consolation to which he is entitled, though so near him; but another, like the Angel to Hagar, may open his eyes, and shew him the well. Sometimes he is cast down, supposing many things are peculiar to himself; especially those painful feelings which arise from the assaults of Satan, and his conflict with indwelling sin, more and more of which he is continually discovering. But you can relieve him by opening your own experience, and letting him know that it is so with you. There is another important case: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

What can be dearer to a man than reputation? A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches; but it may be injured various ways. And surely we ought to be alive to a brother's character; and willingly throw ourselves between him and the strife of tongues. When any thing is said to his disparagement, we should shew that charity, which rejoiceth not in iniquity; but hopeth all things. We should frown away the slander of insinuation. We should not allow a relator to go on, without inquiring whether he will allow us to name it to the person aggrieved, or to the person from whom he affirms he has derived it. What a world of calumny and mischief would this single expedient prevent!—He that helps not in the circulation of the report, yet, if he pleasingly, or even

patiently, sits to hear it, shares half the blame; and, as Dr. South says, the tale-bearer and the tale-hearer should be both hanged up, back to back, only the one by the tongue, and the other by the ear.

The body may need help. And our Saviour bore our infirmities, and sicknesses, by compassion and sympathy. *His* commiseration could bear them away from the sufferers. We cannot perform miracles. But we may be useful by medical aid, and by personal attendance, and succour. And where the malady cannot be removed, the enduring may be alleviated. Is it nothing to the patient, that you visit him in his affliction? that he sees you at the side of the bed of languishing? that, by your tears and prayers, you are answering to the address—Pity me, pity me, O ye my friends! for the hand of God hath touched me?

The estate of our brethren may call for assistance; and is to be relieved according to our ability. It will be as base in us as unprofitable to them, to say, Depart in peace; be ye warmed and filled; while we give them not those things which are needful to the body. "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Job could say, The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. It was the saying of our Lord, It is more blessed to give than to receive. It was the glory of Christianity, in its first powerful effect, that none, who embraced it "lacked." As glory in heaven, and as grace on earth, so the blessings of Providence were free and open to all. The property of Christians went along with their affections; "and distribution was made to every one as he had need." And so tender



were they of each other, that "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." "Oh, this is no rule for us." Well; take it and interpret it in your own way. Yet, will not—what even *you* infer from it as a duty, include much more than is now found in the temper and practice of Christians? "But we are not able."—This is commonly the language of those who *are* able, but not willing. Some *incapacitate* themselves. A decent distinction above the vulgar will not satisfy them; they must be splendid in dress, and luxurious in table, and magnificent in furniture. Others are disabled by hoarding. If accumulation be not condemned by Christianity, the extent of it is. A man may decently provide for his family, without wishing to leave them in the snares of affluence, and with a heap of wealth, which, if they do not dissipate by vice and excess, they are likely only to be concerned to enlarge. And may not persons increase their powers of beneficence, by diligence, and economy, and *self-denial*? And is not self-denial the first lesson in the school of Christ? And you know the grace of Him, who, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you, through his poverty, might be rich—"WE OUGHT TO LAY DOWN OUR LIVES FOR THE BRETHREN."

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## APRIL 20.—MORNING.

"And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly."—LUKE xxii. 44.

AND what must this agony have been, when it is added, that "his sweat was as it were great drops of



blood falling down to the ground!" What, my soul, could have caused this?

—But let us now observe his deportment. For we are not only to view him in his passion as our Mediator, but as also suffering for us, to leave us an example that we should follow his steps. "In his agony he prayed more earnestly." Not that he was cold and formal before in his devotions; but as the hour and power of darkness advanced, and he began to be sore amazed and very heavy; and his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; there was more excitement in his feelings and vehemency in his manner of expression.—Now were the days of his flesh, in which, with strong cryings and tears, he made supplications to Him who was able to save him from death. So it is to be with us. Prayer is never out of season. We see this in the life of Jesus. On what occasion did he not pray? But there is a time when it is specially seasonable. Therefore says God, "Call upon me in the day of trouble." "Is any afflicted? Let him pray." Prayer is the design, the refuge, the solace, the improvement, of affliction; and the greater the distress and anguish we are in, the more necessary will it be, both for our sanctification and support. Let us, therefore, be the more importunate. In the greatness of our distress,

—Let us not, like Adam and Eve, flee, and endeavor to hide ourselves from God—but pray.

—Let us not, like Cain, begin to build, and try, by worldly projects, to dissipate our grief—but pray.

—Let us not, like Jonah, fret under the loss of our gourds, and tell God himself, that we do well to be angry, even unto death—but pray.

—Let us not, like Ephraim and Judah, repair to crea-

tures: "When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wounds, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb: yet could he not heal them, or cure them of their wound"—but pray.

—Let us not, like Saul, who went to the Witch of Endor, repair to the Devil himself, by error, drunkenness, and sin—but pray.

—Let us not, like Ahithophel and Judas, have recourse to suicide, and plunge into hell for relief—but pray. - Let us say, with the Church, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up:" or, with Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in *Him*."

"I seem forsaken and alone,  
I hear the lions roar,  
And every door is shut, but one,  
And that is Mercy's door.

"*There*, till the dear Deliverer comes,  
I'll wait, with humble prayer:  
And, when he calls his exile home,  
The Lord shall find me *there*."

APRIL 20.—EVENING.

"Consider the lilies." MATT. vi. 28.

SOME persons seem to have no relish for the works of nature, and therefore, "seeing many things, they observe not." Others have a taste for everything that is fair, and inviting, and enchanting, in the seasons of the year, and the scenery of the earth, and are never weary of walking in the forest, the meadow, and the garden. For they believe and feel that "God made the country, and man made the town." And all applaud their judgment and sensibility in distinction

from those mechanical beings who are only struck with what is factitious and artificial.

Yet even here one thing more is desirable and necessary. It is that while we are pleased we should be instructed; it is that while our senses are charmed our graces should be exercised; it is that wonder should be followed with adoration, and the Christian be added to the man.

It is thus the sacred writers perpetually send us to the animal and vegetable creation for impression and improvement. And thus our Saviour addressed his hearers and said, "Consider the lilies." There were many other flowers equally worthy of notice with the lilies: but he selected these as specimens, and probably because they were near him and in sight, for he was sitting on the side of a hill, and he mentions not the cultured lilies, but lilies "*of the field.*"

Consider the lilies as productions of God's creating skill. All his works praise him; and what distinguishes *his* works so much from the operations of men is, that they will bear examination, and that the more they are examined the more will they display the wisdom of the Author. Nothing can be added to them, nothing can be taken from them.—"His work is perfect." Take an artificial flower; it shews ingenuity, and deceives the eye at a distance. But bring it near; observe it; compare it; and where are the life, the growth, the opening bud and blossom, the freshness, the colors, the fragrance of the living one? We sometimes admire articles of dress. The rich man was clothed "in purple and fine linen." They that are in kings' houses "wear soft raiment." How exquisitely wrought are some kinds of human manufacture! and yet when you survey them through the microscope

they appear in the rudeness and roughness of sack cloth. But the green and the white of the lily challenge the inspection not only of the eye, but of the glass, and compel you to exclaim, "This is the finger of God." If those versed in mathematical science remark that they cannot go far without meeting with something infinite, how much more must this be the case with every reflecting mind at every step he takes among the wonders of creation!

Again. Consider the lilies as objects of his providential care. This was the peculiar aim of our Lord in the admonition. He would free the minds of his disciples from all undue solicitude respecting their temporal subsistence. Therefore, says he, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" He then refers, in his own inimitable way, to each of the necessities of life, food and clothing—"Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns: yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" How simple, yet convincing, is the inference! God does not love the birds and the flowers as he loves you. He has not bought them with an infinite price. He has not put his Spirit within them. They are not partakers of the Divine

nature. They are not to endure for ever. Will he take care of the less and overlook the infinitely greater?

Consider also the lilies as emblems. First, as emblems of Christ. The image indeed comes very far short of his glory; but it will help our conceptions, and serve to remind us a little of his purity, his meekness, his loveliness, and “the savour of his knowledge:” therefore, says he, “I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.” Secondly, as emblems of Christians. In all things he must have the pre-eminence; but his people are held forth in the Scripture by the same resemblances: for there is not only a union but a conformity between them. They have the same mind which was in him. They bear the image of the heavenly. And therefore, to express their residence in the world, and how he values them above others, he adds, “as the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.”

Let us conclude with the words of the Church: “My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to *gather lilies*.” Thus he comes into our congregations and families, and takes to himself our dear ornaments and delights. We miss them, and sigh over the loss of pious connexions. The friend who was as my own soul, the child of my bosom, the desire of mine eyes, the guide of my youth, is taken away—and the place that once knew them, knows them no more—But *He* taketh away, and who can hinder him? The whole garden is his; and he has a right to do what he will with his own. He saw them meet for the change; and they are unspeakable gainers by the removal. Other lilies when gathered fade and die, but these shall bloom for ever and ever.



## APRIL 21.—MORNING.

“Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.”  
MATT. xxviii. 5.

THIS was the address of an angel to Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, that had come to see the sepulchre before break of day. They were last at the cross, and first at the tomb. Favours are given sovereignly by the Lord, but honour is conferred according to a rule; and the rule is this—“Them that honour me I will honour.”

These women were informed of his resurrection before the Apostles. The Apostles received the intelligence from them; but they received it from an angel. At first, these pious visitants were afraid. And what wonder, when we consider—that they were females—that all their sensibilities were alive—that they were in the garden of another—that they were alone—that the earth was reeling under them—that the guards were fleeing, and perhaps shrieking—that it was early in the morning—and the remaining darkness rendered more visible and awful the Divine messenger sitting at the door of the tomb—his countenance as lightning, and his raiment white as snow! But, says the angel, “*You* have nothing to apprehend from *me*. He is my Master, as well as your Saviour. I serve him whom ye seek; and, having attended his resurrection, I now announce it to you. He is not here; he is risen, as he said—Step forward—Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”

And it is true, in its most extended application, that they who seek Jesus Christ which was crucified,

have really nothing to fear, whatever at first may dismay them.

But who are entitled to this assurance? Do you feel your need of him as once you did not, for all the purposes of salvation? Have you desires after him—so peculiar that nothing else can satisfy them—so powerful as to make you willing to part with whatever stands in competition with him? Are you determined to press through all difficulties? Are you found in the use of all the means which he has appointed? Are you submissively asking, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? depending on the aid of his Holy Spirit? and looking for his mercy unto eternal life? If you can answer these questions in the affirmative, *I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified.*"

—And I also know, that ye have nothing to fear, "Fear not ye."—Fear not that you have a graceless heart—the very seeking is a token for good. It cannot be the effect of Nature—that which is of the flesh is flesh; but that which is of the Spirit is spirit. They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.—Fear not that your search will be successful. Had he a mind to kill you, he would not have shewn you such things as these. His aim, in making you sensible of your condition, was not to render you miserable, but to endear himself; and to draw forth your souls after him. You shall not be disappointed. You may be tried, but he will appear to your joy. Did any ever seek him in vain? Can he deny himself? They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.—Fear not that you shall fall under the power of any evil. From

what evil are you not secured? Is it temporal want? The young lions may lack and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. Is it the penalty of the Law? He has redeemed you from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for you. Is it sin? Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace. Is it the world? This is the victory that overcometh the world; even our faith. Is it Satan? The God of peace will bruise Satan under your feet shortly. Is it death? He has abolished death. O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory? "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

## APRIL 21.—EVENING.

"That we might be fellow-helpers to the truth." 3 JOHN i. 8.

CO-OPERATION supposes others engaged already in the same cause. Who these were we learn from the preceding words. They are called "brethren and strangers." Yet they were not private Christians, but preachers, evangelists, missionaries who travelled to spread the savour of the Redeemer's knowledge in every place—"Because for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles." The labourer is worthy of his hire; and God has ordained that they who preach the Gospel shall live of the Gospel: but these men waived their right, as Paul had done while

Corinth, that they might not seem mercenary, or prove burdensome. These Gentiles, too, might have been indisposed to afford them reception and support. Such a readiness to come forward can hardly be expected from persons *before* they have heard the word, so as to understand the importance of it. People do not make sacrifices for a thing they do not value; and they are not likely to value what they do not feel they need. We have seen infants at the funeral of a mother, instead of being affected with the scene, amusing themselves with the emblems of mortality: but nothing can be more affecting than this; and we have been ready to exclaim, Ah! ye dear babes, you little know the loss you have sustained, but as you grow up, you will learn it from experience. Does the maniac ask our pity and help? He scorns them. He sings in his confinement—it is his palace—he deems himself a king. But is he not the more entitled to our compassion, on this very account? So here; none are so worthy of our merciful regard as those who are perishing for lack of knowledge, but are unaffected with their condition: and it must be our concern to make them sensible of their want. In the first instance, they will not come to us—we must go to them—and we must seek, if we would save, that which is lost. They will not be at the charge of our messengers; others, therefore, must support them. And on whom are we to call for assistance, but on those who have tasted the good word of life, and know by experience that the Gospel is the power of God to salvation? “We ought therefore,” says John, “to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth.”

And such was Gaius. He was not one of those

that went forth to labour among those who could not or would not entertain and supply them : but when these teachers travelled that way, he accommodated them in his house ; he forwarded them on their journey after a godly sort ; he furnished them with what was needful in their work ; and encouraged them to apply to him in their exigencies. In this, some may resemble him expressly by attentions and kindness to our evangelists at home : and as to our missionaries at a distance, and to whom we can have no immediate access, all can countenance and aid them by helping those societies which engage them, and are responsible for their support. To do this is a duty. When persons are drawn in the militia, if they go not themselves, they must procure substitutes. All cannot go forth among the Gentiles, but we should all contribute to those who do. We should consider them as *our* agents, laboring for us—for the work is *ours*—and the command is binding upon *us*, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.”

Nothing is to be done, even in the cause of God, without pecuniary aid. What an honour is conferred on property, that it should be employed in the salvation of souls ! Who would waste any of his resources ? Who would not deny himself, to be able to become a fellow-helper to the truth that has so helped him, and can so help others ? Mordecai told Esther, that if she refused to exert herself for the deliverance of her people, enlargement should come from another quarter ; but then she would lose the honour and blessedness of the instrumentality ; and not only so, but be destroyed herself. God allows us to act in his cause ; but let us not mistake the principle : he employs us for our sake, not his own. His resources are



infinite; and if we decline the work, the work will not be abandoned; but we shall lose the glory and the happiness of the achievement. And who could endure the thought, that in this Divine undertaking, he had never had any concern? But this is not all. There is danger, as well as loss. Our inaction is guilt. We neglect the use of the finest opportunity for usefulness. We hide our talent in the earth. Our indifference is rebellion to the call of God. "Who will rise up for me against the evil doers? Who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?" "Curse ye Meroz," said the angel of the Lord: "curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

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## APRIL 22.—MORNING.

"It came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee. And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel." NUMB. x. 35, 36.

WE might have expected that *Aaron* would have done this, as he was the high priest. But *Moses* was the leader and commander of the people; and he was not offering sacrifice, or burning incense—in which he would have offended; but performing a duty of natural, as well as revealed religion. This is binding upon all, and especially upon public men. Thus *Solomon*, though a king, kneeled on a scaffold of wood, at the dedication of the temple, and led himself the prayers of the nation. Princes, officers, magistrates, masters of families, should all be men of

prayer. Relative, as well as personal claims, bind them to the duty.

It would seem that Moses always, on these occasions, employed the same terms. Our Lord also, in the garden, prayed three times, saying the same words. It is obvious from hence, that whatever advantages extemporaneous prayer possesses—and it has many—yet forms of prayer cannot be in themselves improper, in public or in private.

As Moses thus addressed God at the commencement, and the conclusion, of every march—does it not behove us to acknowledge him in all our ways? and with prayer to begin and end every day? every meal? every ordinance? every enterprise? every journey? every going out, and every coming in?

Especially, let us think of those short and sublime addresses, in our travelling heavenward through this wilderness world.

Here is the marching prayer—"Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee." That is—"Before we move, we commend ourselves to thy guidance, and guardian care, and almighty agency. We are passing, not only through strange, but hostile regions. There are foes, open or concealed, which would hinder our progress—rob us—wound us—destroy us. But we are thy charge, and engaged in thy cause. They that hate us, hate thee. Our enemies are *thy* enemies. And, formidable as they are, thou canst as easily vanquish them as the sun, rising in his strength, can disperse the shadows that seem to oppose his march." Let us realize this, and we shall feel enough to animate us to go forward, though men, though devils, beset our path. "The Lord is my light and my sal-

vation ; whom shall I fear ? The Lord is the strength of my life ; of whom shall I be afraid ? Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear : though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident."

Here is the resting prayer—"Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel." That is—If *Thou* goest on, in vain we are left. What can we do without thee in our encampment, any more than in our march ? Thy presence is our security, our treasure, our glory, our joy. What is any station without Thee?—How can its duties be discharged ? its trials be endured ? its comforts be sanctified ? But every residence, with Thee, is ennobled and blessed. Heaven is the only tabernacle of God with men.—Thus the two disciples, when the Lord made as if he would have gone farther, constrained him, saying, It is toward evening, and the day is far spent—and—did he refuse ? He went in to tarry with them. Do we thus prize him ? Do we thus pray that he would go where we go, and dwell where we dwell ? If not, we have a poor prospect before us. If we *can* live without God with us in this world, we *must* live without him in another. But if our souls cleave to Him, and cry, "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me,"—we may rejoice in the promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

—But let me not here overlook two things. First, The number of his people—"The many thousands of Israel." "For" unless we send out ignorance and bigotry to count them, "who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel?" And the Lord add to his people, how many soever they be, a thousandfold ! Secondly, We should be

concerned for the whole Israel of God. They all belong to us. They are all fellow-citizens of the same community; branches of the same household; members of the same body. They are more intimately related, and ought to be more endeared to us, than any earthly friends, or natural relations.

—Pray, therefore, for the peace of Jerusalem. For your brethren and companions' sakes, say, Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces—"Return, O Lord,"—not unto our family, or tribe; not unto the thousands of Episcopalians, or Dissenters—but "unto the many thousands of Israel." "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." And, "As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."

## APRIL 22.—EVENING.

"If God were your Father, ye would love me." JOHN viii. 42.

SOME are so full of self-conceit and self-sufficiency, that they seem to consider themselves the standard of all worth and excellency; and are disposed to judge of others principally, if not only, by their regard to *them*. If you dislike *them*, you are worthless; but just in proportion as you esteem and admire *them*, you rise in value. And such is the injustice of our fallen nature, that we are pleased with commendations which we know we do not deserve; and court praise for abilities and qualities which we are sure we do not possess.

It was not so with Christ. He was meek and lowly in heart; and if he spoke highly of himself, it was not from pride and vainglory, but from the necessity of

the case. He knew himself; he knew his importance to us; and he knew that we ought to be acquainted with it. Therefore he said, "Come unto me"—"I am the light of the world"—"I am the bread of life"—"I am the way, the truth, and the life"—"This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." He knew that God's relation to us could only be determined by our regard to himself, and therefore he was authorized and required to say, "If God were your Father, ye would love me." There can be no doubt of this: for he that belongs to God will resemble him: he will love peculiarly what God loves peculiarly; and he will love supremely what God loves supremely: and "this," says he, "is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." "Mine elect in whom my soul delighteth." "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand."

It is a great thing to have God for our father—not by creation, in which sense all mankind are his offspring; but by adoption and regeneration. What an honour! What a blessedness! To be the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty! To have free and invited access to him! To share in all the love and pity of his heart! To be authorized to depend upon him for instruction, and correction, and defence, and support! To be heirs of God, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us!

But how are we to ascertain this privilege? By our regard to Christ—if God is our Father, we love him. Now this love, though not a passion, is a real, powerful, influential principle; and it is the main-spring of action in the Christian life. There are two



modes of determining our love to him. The First is to consider him relatively, and observe how we are affected towards those parts of him, so to speak, with which we are constantly coming more immediately into contact. There is "the Lord's day"—Do I love this; and can I call the Sabbath a delight? There is "the word of Christ"—Can I say, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and the rejoicing of my heart?" He has a house for his name—Can I say, "I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth?" He has a seed to serve him—Do I pray, "Remember me with the favour thou bearest unto thy people?" They are "the excellent of the earth"—Is all my delight in them? If I love him, I shall love every thing that is his.

The Second is to consider how our attachment to any other object affects us. If I love an object, I naturally, unavoidably, frequently, pleasantly *think* of it. Can I love Christ, and not have him much in my thoughts? If I love an object, I am led to  *speak* of it: I cannot help referring to it, and recommending it: out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. What reason have I to conclude that I love Christ, unless he often enters my discourse; and I feel myself at home while talking of his glory? If I love a friend, I shall desire nearness to him, and communion with him. And how can I love Christ, unless I mourn his absence, and long after intercourse with him especially in his ordinances—"Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon?"—If I love a benefactor, I shall inquire how I can make suitable returns for his kindness; I shall be afraid to grieve him; I shall be

anxious to please him; I shall be willing to make sacrifices for his sake. Do I discover the same disposition towards Christ?

This yields a dreadful reflection with regard to some. They are those who do not love Christ—God is not their Father—They are the children of the devil. And the lusts of their father they will do. And with him and his angels, and all who “cannot love,” they will have their portion for ever—“If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha.”

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## APRIL 23.—MORNING.

“From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the Rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy.” Ps. lxi. 2, 3.

HE does the most important service who instructs us to pray. We may here learn much from the example of David.

—*How* would he pray? “I will *cry* unto Thee.” Crying is a substitute for speech; and also the expression of earnestness. A child can cry, long before it can articulate; and its cries as much move the parent as any eloquence of words. A person in great danger, or want, or pain, not only utters himself, but cries out, and often aloud, according to the pressure of his feelings. Let me pray as I can. I may not be able to express my desires as some do; but, if I am deeply affected by them, and they spring from a broken heart and contrite spirit, they shall not be despised.

—*Where* would he pray? “*From the ends of the*

*earth* will I cry unto Thee.” He means, any condition, however desolate, or distant—distance of place being put for greatness of extremity. Sometimes we may be thrown into situations the most trying and remote from human aid. But wherever we are, God is *there* to hear and succour us. Thus Joseph found him, when sold into Egypt; and John, when he was exiled in Patmos; and Paul, when tossed far off upon the sea. We are as near the throne of Grace in one place as another. Prayer can reach him wherever we are, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. “While they speak I will answer; and before they speak I will hear.”

—*When* would he pray? “When my *heart is overwhelmed.*” Not that he would restrain prayer at other times—we are to pray without ceasing. It is the character of a hypocrite, that he will not always call upon God. There are birds who only make a noise at the approach of bad weather; and there are persons who only pour out a prayer when God’s chastening hand is upon them. But what should we think of a neighbour or friend, who never called upon us but when he wanted to borrow or to beg?—Yet, what is always proper may be sometimes peculiarly seasonable, natural, and necessary. And this is the case when we are in trouble and affliction. Therefore says God, Call upon me in the day of trouble. The answer will in due time relieve and deliver. The exercise will immediately soothe and sanctify. Is any afflicted? Let him pray.

—*For what* would he pray? “*Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.*” What means he by this Rock, but something which could afford him support, when he was ready to be swallowed up? The perfections

of Jehovah; the everlasting Covenant; the doctrine of Providence; the Lord Jesus, who is our hope—This is the rest, and this is the refreshing. And yet, when the relief is provided, and when we see it too, we cannot reach it of ourselves. We need a Divine agency to conduct us to it. We not only live in the Spirit, but walk in the Spirit.

—*Whence* does he derive his encouragement to pray? “For thou *hast been* a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy.” Nothing can be more confirming and exciting, than the review of God’s former interpositions on our behalf: and to reason from what he has been, to what he will be; and from what he has done, to what he will do. For he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. And they that know his Name will put their trust in him.

“ His love, in time past,  
 Forbids me to think  
 He’ll leave me, at last,  
 In trouble to sink.  
 Each sweet Ebenezer  
 I have in review  
 Confirms his good pleasure  
 To help me quite through.”

## APRIL 23.—EVENING.

“Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.” 1 TIM. i. 16.

THE Lord Jesus never acts without design; and his purposes are worthy of himself. When we consider its capacity and duration, the evils from which it is rescued, and the blessings to which it is advanced, the

salvation of *one soul* is a work infinitely greater than the deliverance of a whole country from civil bondage; and therefore there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over *one* sinner that repenteth. Yet in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus his aim did not terminate in *his* salvation, all important as it was. He looked far beyond, and intended that it should bear influentially on the recovery of others to the end of time.

And thus we see the greatness of his beneficence. Men wish to have their goodness known; but it is from self-love, and not from kindness. It is to gain applause, and not to excite and bring others to their door. And therefore they sometimes enjoin those they relieve to say nothing of their bounty, not from humility but economy, lest applications should be too numerous. But the Lord Jesus knows his resources; and is not afraid of multiplied importunity. He wishes his favours to be known, that others may come and be relieved; for he delighteth in mercy.

How many principles are involved in the design here expressed!—The subjects of Divine grace believe on him to life everlasting.—A succession of these believers will arise from age to age.—They will find it no easy thing to believe on him, and will feel their need of strong consolation.—Encouragement is necessary; for nothing can be done without hope and confidence.—The Saviour is concerned to furnish the relief.—And in doing this he produces actual examples of the freshness and fulness of his grace. Facts strike; they furnish us with sensible evidence. A debtor frankly forgiven an immense sum when going to prison, and having nothing to pay, shews forth most impressively the clemency of the creditor.



The goodness of a prince appears in pardoning the greatest crimes against him. This indeed is rarely done among men. In all acts of grace some exceptions are made. The ringleaders are excluded. Their impunity would seem a connivance at rebellion, and would endanger the safety and welfare of the state. But he saves sinners, says the Apostle, of whom I am *chief*. Here the ringleader of the persecutors, who gave unity to their counsels and stimulus to their zeal, is laid hold of, not to be punished, but pardoned—laid hold of too for this purpose in the very act of rebellion and treason—and made a pattern of mercy, to encourage others to trust in him.

We know what effect this kindness had upon himself. It changed his mind. It melted his heart. It softened the lion into a lamb. Behold, he prayeth—prayeth to him whom a moment before he had abhorred—"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And from that moment, the love of Christ constrained him to live to him that died for him, and rose again.

What effect has it upon us? Do we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid! "No man can quicken his own soul. We cannot change our own heart. The Bible is a sealed book till we are enlightened. It is useless for us to pray without the Spirit. If we belong to his people, he will call us in due time."—This is the devil's reasoning; and it is not the better for employing the language of Scripture, or of perverted orthodoxy. And what a proof is it, that we are not yet sensible of our lost condition!—If we were, we could not sit still, and thus argue or cavil. We should resemble a man who found himself in a house on fire—he *must* move—he *could* not avoid striving to escape, though at first,

perhaps, not by the right passage. What a proof is it that we are not really desirous of salvation! else we should say, "I have read Paul's case. It meets my condition. I am unworthy; so was he. But he obtained mercy; and why should I be refused?"

This is the proper use of it—I see in this model, his power and his compassion—I will go to his footstool, and cry, "Lord, save, I perish;" "God be merciful to me, a sinner!"

It should equally encourage us with regard to others. Despondency chills our zeal, and prevents our efforts to save others. But why should we cease to pray, and use all the means within our power? Duty is ours; and none of our fellow-creatures are beyond his reach, who called by his grace a Saul of Tarsus.

Blessed Jesus! Thou art fairer than the children of men! But while we admire thee, we would also resemble. May thy mind be in us! Art thou so longsuffering towards us, and shall we bear with nothing in our brethren? Art thou so ready to forgive, and shall we be revengeful? Didst thou when rich, for our sakes become poor, and shall we be masses of pure selfishness, and never deny ourselves to promote the welfare of others?

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## APRIL 24.--MORNING.

"But now they are hid from thine eyes." LUKE xix. 42.

WHEN Pharaoh saw there was respite, he hardened his heart. Solomon tells us, Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do

evil. But God's keeping silence is not approbation. His longsuffering is not even connivance. He can be merciful, without allowing us to trifle, and insult him for ever. His patience has its rules and its bounds. And Jerusalem knew this.

Much has been said on what is termed a day of grace; and much which we neither admire nor believe. We are not authorized to say any one is beyond hope, while he is yet in life. Manasseh would have seemed very likely to be such a desperate character; but *he* obtained mercy.

“ And while the lamp holds out to burn,  
The vilest sinner may return.”

If we cannot view any of our fellow-creatures as beyond the possibility of salvation, so we have no rule by which we can absolutely determine against ourselves.—Yet there are several things of fearful import, to which we do well to attend.

First. The language of the word of God is fearful. “Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone.” “Israel would none of me; so I gave them up to their own hearts' lust.” “In thy filthiness is lewdness: because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee.” “If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin; but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.” “Because I have called, and ye refused: I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded: but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will

laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." "Behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation." We offer no commentary on these passages—but, surely, their language is fearful.

Secondly. We know that final impenitency is irrecoverably hopeless; and *with life* all our opportunities end—and this is fearful. It would not be kindness, but cruelty, to flatter men with a contrary expectation.—Search the Scripture, and you will always find a difference between the present and the future. One is a state of trial, the other of decision. The one is sowing, the other reaping: and whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. Is not this sufficient to induce us to seek the Lord while he may be found; and to call upon him while he is near?

Thirdly. This life, upon which every thing depends, is very brief—this is fearful. Look at the images of Scripture: a flower of the field; a flood; a watch in the night; a dream; a vapour. Consider the deaths that come under your own observation. Observe the frailty of your frame. Remember the numberless diseases and accidents to which you are exposed. Think of your pulse, where the question is asked sixty times every minute, whether you shall live or die.

Fourthly. Our continuance here is as uncertain as it is short—this is fearful. "I have not had," said a good man, "a to-morrow for years." It would be well if we had not. Indeed we have not in *reality*, whatever we may have in imagination. "Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

Fifthly. Before this short and uncertain period

terminates, many opportunities and advantages may elapse, to return no more—this is fearful. Many convictions may die away, no more to be renewed again unto repentance. We may be deprived of reason; and religion can only operate through the medium of thought. Old age helps on insensibility; and before we are aware, though unpardoned and unrenewed, we may become incapable of a moral change. The Gospel may be removed from us. We may be placed where it is not in our power to attend it. We may become deaf, or blind. Sickness may confine us to a room of pain, or a bed of languishing. The influences necessary to render the means of grace effectual may be withholden. Though Paul plants, and Apollos waters, God alone gives the increase: and though we can do nothing to deserve his grace, we may provoke his anger; and he may judicially give us up to a reprobate mind. The heart is hardened through the deceitfulness of sin—and no less so by familiarity with divine things. And is not this the case with many? Once their consciences smote them. They dropped a tear upon their Bible. When walking alone, among the works of God, they prayed, “Lord, I am thine; save me.” But Felix no more trembles. And the Gadarenes have besought the healer of their neighbours, and the reprover of their sin, to depart out of their coasts; and he is gone for ever!



## APRIL 24.—EVENING.

“And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. And he went on his journeys from the south even to Beth-el, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Beth-el and Hai; unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the Lord.” GEN. xiii. 1, 3, 4.

IN this movement of Abram two things are noticed—whence he came—and whither he went.

“He went up out of Egypt.” But how came he there? He was driven by famine. Skin for skin, yea all that a man hath will he give for his life. Abram therefore was justified in going thither. We are not to starve if we can obtain subsistence lawfully. We tempt God if we do not avail ourselves of the means and opportunities of relief and assistance which he affords us in the course of his providence. For though we are to cast our care, we are not to cast our duty upon the Lord; and it is only in the way of duty that we can trust in him. But we may be found in places and conditions at the call of duty or necessity in which we are not to abide. Naomi and the Shunamite who had fled to Moab in the dearth, returned like true Israelites when they heard that the Lord had visited his people with bread. And Abram did not settle in Egypt, but only sojourned there. He had succeeded while there, so as to increase in wealth, and Egypt was at this time the most famous country on earth: but it had been to him a place of temptation; it was irreligious; and Canaan was the land which the Lord had shewn him—the land of promise. And what is this world to us, if we are the children of Abram by faith, but a temporary residence? It is

not our home: it is not our rest. And we must arise and depart hence, in thought, affection, and pursuit; and by a readiness to leave it actually whenever our change comes. If we are the heirs of promise, Canaan will draw us out of Egypt.

“And he went on, even to Beth-el.” There he had dwelt before. It is affecting to return to a place where we formerly resided. Who can help reflecting upon his sins there? (for wherever we have lived we have proved ourselves to be sinners,) and the blessings he enjoyed there; and his trials; and the changes which have taken place, and the progress of his time since? But Abram had not only dwelt at Beth-el, but dwelt there as a man of faith, piety, and prayer. What a difference is there between returning to a place where we lived without God in the world; and to one where we loved and served God, and walked with him, and said of many a spot, “This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!”

Observe how pleasingly and significantly this is expressed with regard to Abram—He came “unto the place where *his tent* had been *from the beginning*, between Beth-el and Hai; unto the place of *the altar* which he had made there *at the first*—and *there* Abram called on the name of the Lord.” Thus we see his devotion here was not a *novelty*—it had been a constant usage. As soon as he pitched a *tent* for himself he reared an *altar* for God. Where he resided, he sacrificed and worshipped with his household. And they who would be the children of Abram must walk in his steps, and be concerned to keep up the service of God with their families. Family-worship is no recent thing. It is the good old way, in which even the

patriarchs walked. I pity as well as condemn the man who has a "tent," but no "altar." God threatens to pour out his fury upon the families that call not upon his name. Therefore says Solomon, "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked; but he blesseth the habitation of the just."

—Abram thus called upon the name of the Lord, notwithstanding the character of his neighbours; for the chapter tells us, "The Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land." And they were idolaters, and vicious to a proverb. They would therefore oppose, and laugh, and ridicule—But Abram was not ashamed of his glory—Yea, as he was the more bound, so he was the more disposed and determined to confess him before men. And "them that honour me," says God, "I will honour; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

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## APRIL 25.—MORNING.

"In the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." MARK i. 35.

AND yet he had been greatly occupied the whole of the day preceding this. We think little of time; but he never passed an idle hour. The whole of his life said, I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is yet day: the night cometh wherein no man can work. He was really a man; he took our infirmities: and wearied nature required repose: but he distinguished between the necessary and the needless; and even between refreshment and indulgence; and while he enjoined self-denial upon his disciples, as the very first lesson in his school, "he pleased not himself."

It is allowed that, as to the measure of sleep, no one rule can be laid down for all. Some require more than others. But it is questionable whether they require *much* more. Yea, it may be questioned, whether they require *any* more, as to *length*. What they want more of is *better* sleep: and the quality would be improved by lessening the quantity. Let those who are now so wakeful, and restless, and can only sleep sound when they ought to be rising—let them try the expedient, and see whether a few hours of sweet and solid sleep be not preferable to the privilege of being bedridden, rather than of enjoying repose.

We should also inquire too, whether we have not produced the habit itself that *now* demands so much to satisfy it. If so, we are accountable for the cause, as well as the effect:

—We should also be always fearful and suspicious when our reasonings and pleadings are on the side of gratification and ease. It is here, where nothing sinful is thought of, and no danger appears,—it is here we peculiarly need the admonition, Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

—Some live only to do evil. We do not wish *them* to rise early. They are only harmless while they sleep.

—Some live a life of mere indolence and ease. They are indeed free from vice, but they have no useful employment. It is of little importance at what time *they* rise.—There is very little difference between their sleeping and wakeful hours. The one is as barren as the other of any active endeavours to glorify God, or serve their generation, or work out their own salvation.

But surely there are some who feel that life is infinitely important: who know that they are placed here to gain good and to do good: who remember that the only opportunities they have for both, are short and uncertain—Surely these will not sleep as do others—Surely these will feel the excitement and reproach—It is high time to awake out of sleep—They that sleep, sleep in the *night*.

—In a word, has not early rising every recommendation? Is it not *physically* advantageous? Is it not better for health? Consult your strength, your appetite, your nerves, your spirits, your complexion. Ask your physician. Is there a medical man upon earth that would risk his reputation by a contrary opinion? Sinclair, in his volumes on health and longevity, remarks, that though those who lived to a very great age differed in many things, they all resembled each other here. There was not one of them but rose early.

—Is it not desirable as to our civil concerns? What an advantage has a tradesman by early rising—in planning and arranging his concerns for the day; in forwarding his work, and placing it under his command; and in having leisure for any incidental engagement, without stopping or deranging the usual course of his calling:—While another, who has said, A little more sleep, a little more slumber; and who begins at ten what he should have commenced at six; is thrown into haste and confusion; hurries on, to overtake himself; finds through the day his duty a turmoil; and feels himself a drudge. If we turn from the shop and look into the family, what a difference between the early and late mistress! and the early and the late servant! Even those who do not



practise early rising themselves plead for the importance of it in their domestics, and would never engage them without it. Indeed the reputation of every individual, whatever be his condition in life, is concerned in it; and his character, in the feelings of others, is unavoidably lowered by late rising, unless there be a known and justifiable cause.

—Above all, is it not *morally* important? The Heathens said, the morning was the friend to the Muses. It is surely a friend to the Graces. If it be the best time for study, it is also the best time for devotion. It is better to go from prayer to business than from business to prayer. Intercourse with God prepares us for our intercourse with our fellow-creatures; and for every occurrence, whether pleasing or painful. Who would go out in the morning, not knowing what a day may bring forth, and feeling his ignorance, and weakness, and depravity, and danger—without retiring first, and committing himself to God? Boerhaave, the celebrated physician, rose early in the morning, and, through life, his practice was to retire an hour for private prayer and meditation. This, he often told his friends, gave him firmness and vigour for the business of the day. He commended it, therefore, from experience, as one of the best rules of life. The great Judge Hale, too, rose early, and retired for prayer, and read a portion of God's word; without which, he said, nothing prospered with him all the day. But see the Lord of all!—What did *He*?

## APRIL 25.—EVENING.

“Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities.” 1 TIM. v. 23.

It may at first seem strange that Paul should only have recourse to ordinary means, such as any other person would have used on the same occasion—that he should advise and *prescribe* as a friend, instead of employing the powers he possessed as an Apostle. But as the working of miracles was a delegated prerogative, so it was limited. It was confined to particular moments and subjects. Otherwise John, instead of wishing above all things that his beloved Gaius was in health, would have healed him: and Paul would not have left his companion Trophimus at Miletum sick. Simon Magus wished to obtain the gift of working miracles for the purposes of vanity and gain. It is easy to see, from the disposition of the people to worship Paul and Barnabas when they had healed the cripple at Lystra, what a source of honour and emolument the ability would have become, had it been at the option of the possessors. Even good men, being imperfect while here, might have been tempted to pervert it, or have sometimes used it with respect of persons, influenced by natural or partial affection. The effect, therefore, depended entirely upon the pleasure of the Almighty. How useful was Timothy! How highly did the Apostle think of him—how strongly was he attached to him—how peculiarly was he concerned for his welfare! yet though he had performed so many wonders and signs, he can only with regard even to *him*, sympathise, and pray, and admonish—“Drink no longer water, but

use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities."

But here we see the importance of health. Of all natural blessings it is the most personal, and the most prized. It is not so much of an ingredient in human happiness as the foundation of it. With the Grecians it was a goddess. The Lycaonians worshipped the image of health, and the women offered to it their hair, which is their glory—That is, they sacrificed ornament to health—Some females have sacrificed health to ornament. Have we ever looked into the wards of an hospital or an infirmary? Have we ever visited the sick chamber of a friend or neighbor?—what confinement! what restlessness! what disrelishes! what loathings! what days of languishing! what wearisome nights! Health is never so valued as when it brings a letter of recommendation from sickness. Have we been the subject of it? What were *then* a well-spread table, an elegantly furnished room, the aspects of the garden and field, the charms of the favorite author! Cowper and Milton with their heavenly harps sing their songs to a heavy heart.

But health is important, not only as to enjoyment, but usefulness. The discharge of almost all the duties of life depends upon it. How much is suspended upon the indisposition of a minister whose lips feed many!—How much upon the illness of a wife, a mother, the mistress of the family, the centre, the eye, the hand, the soul of the domestic system!—It is only at such a time and in such circumstances her utility can be fully felt. Health too has its spiritual bearings. In all the works of religion the body is the companion of the soul, but in many it is the instrument. We cannot read, or hear, or sing, or go to the house of

God without it. Many of what good people call their temptations, and doubts, and fears, are only physical effects. The frame is disordered through which they see and feel. Hence they are affected even in their intercourse with God; and when they consider, are afraid of him. How many privileges too, in the means of grace, are they deprived of while they are the prisoners of sickness, the remembrance of which draws forth their tears!

Here we see that very good men and very useful men may be the subjects of bodily affliction. Timothy had a weakly, sickly constitution, and Paul speaks of his "frequent infirmities" or indispositions. Many other excellent individuals mentioned in the Scripture were exercised in the same way. And so it has been in every age of the Church. We are acquainted with the biography of many eminent servants of God in modern times, who prosecuted the duties of their callings under weaknesses and pains, a small part of which would keep many professors of religion from the sanctuary of God, by the month or the year.—But let not the weak and sickly suppose that what has befallen them is not common to men—The same afflictions have happened to their brethren who were before them in the world. And if we knew all, we should cease to wonder at such dispensations. The Lord's love to his people is great, but it is wise; and he regulates his measures not by their wishes, but their welfare. There is a "needs-be" for every ailment, and every pain. While he chastens, he teaches us out of his law. The tender mother overlooks none of her offspring: but the breathless tread, the pillowed couch, the knee, the bosom, the indulgence, are for the little invalid endeared by the pain he suffers, and

even by the care he creates—And what says God? “As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.”—

We learn also that we may err on the side of deficiency as well as excess. There are always two extremes: yet, in going from the one, we rarely consider that we are in any danger from the other. But wisdom leads in the way of righteousness; in the midst of the paths of judgment: and it becomes us, with regard to all our concerns and movements, to hear the word behind us, saying, “This is the way, walk ye in it when we turn to the right hand, or when we turn to the left.” We may fail as to the spirit we are of, not only on the side of a bold and firm temper, but on the side of a tender and candid one. A man is required to be diligent in business, but he must not entangle himself in the affairs of this life. He ought to be economical and frugal, but he may run into closeness and meanness. Even temperance, so useful and commendable, may become a snare; and there have been instances of persons under a religious motive, injuring themselves by self-denial and abstinence. Timothy was in danger of this. He had to this time used water only, but he was following this abstemiousness too exclusively and too long: his system now required something more generous, and restorative, and strengthening, and therefore says his friend, “Drink no *longer* water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities.”

As there was nothing in Paul enthusiastical, or leading him to the neglect of means and rational means, so there was nothing in him favouring of superstition. He withholds a Christian from no creature-comfort. Hé knew of none of those prohibitions,



"Touch not, taste not, handle not," which have produced such results in the church of Rome, unless to foretell and condemn them: "in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to-seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." David observes, that God bringeth forth out of the earth "*wine* that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face shine," as well as "bread that strengtheneth man's heart." And his son made no scruple to say to a good man, "Eat thy bread with cheerfulness, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God hath accepted thy works."

But we have here laid down the rules we are to observe in the use of natural refreshments. They are two, and they contain all that is necessary upon the subject. The first is moderation—"Drink *a little* wine." We should fear danger, especially in an article of indulgence. The evil steals upon us by degrees, and therefore insensibly. Who ever became intemperate at once? or without resolutions to the contrary? "Nature," says Hall, "is content with little; grace with less." The second regards our design—"for thy *stomach's* sake and thine *often infirmities*." That is, we are to use these good things, not for the mere gratification of appetite, but to fit us for our stations, and to enable us to serve God. The former within proper bounds, is a lawful use; the latter is a pious one. In the first, the creature only appears; in the second, the Christian is seen. Some live to eat and drink; some

eat and drink to live. The former are the dishonour, the latter are the glory, of human kind. Even in common things the partakers of Divine grace are a peculiar people—Their motive distinguishes them. This turns a natural action into a spiritual duty. This also enlarges the province of their religion to the extent of all their concerns: keeps them waiting upon God all the day long; and enables them, whether they eat, or drink, or whatever they do, to do all to the glory of God.

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## APRIL 26.—MORNING.

“Sitting at the feet of Jesus.” LUKE viii. 35.

—THIS was a place of nearness. Love longs to be near its attraction—and this man loves his benefactor, and feels his obligations to his pity and power.

—It was a place of safety. He naturally dreaded the return of the malady, and the devils gaining possession of him again—he therefore keeps close to his Deliverer.

It was the place of instruction. The two former purposes might have been answered by his sitting at the side of Jesus. But sitting at his feet was the position and posture of a learner. “They sat down at his feet,” says Moses, when God was on the top of Horeb, and the people at the bottom, “and received of his words.” Isaiah, speaking of Abraham, says, “God called him to his feet.” Martha had a sister, “who also sat at Jesus’ feet.” Saul of Tarsus “was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel.” In all these instances there is a reference to the ancient and Eastern custom—when the master occupied a higher seat, and

the scholars were sitting at his feet—as hereby he had them in view, and they were reminded, by their very place, of the reverence and submission which became them as learners.

This is the place we should all be found in. But how is it possible for us to sit at his feet now? He said, I am no more in the world: and the heavens have received him till the restitution of all things. It is true, he is no longer here corporeally; but he is here spiritually. He is not visible, but he is accessible.

We have his Throne, and his House, and his Word, and his ministers, and his ordinances—We have Himself: for he has said, Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them—We can, therefore, sit at his feet. And, in recommendation of this place, let us observe the excellences of the Master, and the advantages of his disciples; for the one involves the other.

And here we must not overlook the dignity of his character. A tutor seems to shed lustre over his pupils: and scholars have always prided themselves in the name of an illustrious preceptor. A young Israelitish prophet would have boasted in having been in the school of Samuel, or Elijah. How far did the Queen of Sheba come to hear the wisdom of Solomon!—But, behold, a greater than Solomon is here!—One fairer than the children of men—He is Lord of All. See the poor, despised Christian. He is debarred every seat of learning among men; but he is under a Divine instructor, and such honour have all his saints. For, so highly are they related; so peculiar is their destination; so sublime are the stations

they are to fill, and the functions they are to discharge, as kings and priests unto God for ever; that their education is not entrusted to a creature—All thy children shall be taught of the Lord.

There is, also, the perfection of his ability. In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Other teachers may be mistaken, and they may deceive us. They cannot, therefore, deserve our implicit and absolute confidence. But he knows every thing, and every thing perfectly. We cannot, therefore, rely too much on his decisions. Heaven and earth may pass away; but his word shall not pass away.

There is the kindness of his manner. Men often discourage, and intimidate learners, by their distance, hastiness, and austerity. They have not longsuffering, and gentleness, and tenderness enough, to attract and attach the very soul of the pupil; to soften and shame him, if perverse; to fix him, if roving and volatile; to inspire him with confidence, if timid; and to produce in him at once, that freedom and application of mind, so essential to improvement, and so incompatible with agitation and confusion of spirit. For something besides talent—and may we not say, something beyond talent?—is required in a teacher. In proportion to the greatness of his knowledge, and the quickness and facility of his apprehension, a master will be tried by the imperfections of his scholars; and the scholars will be the more liable to be abashed and depressed. Conscious of their ignorance, and inability, and slowness, they will be reluctant, and afraid to give up themselves to such a superior tutor—unless he has other qualities: and such a tutor will not be very likely to waste, as he would suppose, *his* time

and talents, upon such unpromising subjects. But *we* sit at the feet of One, whose condescension equals his greatness. He will stoop to teach me, even where I must *begin*. He will accommodate himself to my wants and weakness. He will repeat his lessons. He will give me line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little—and upbraid not. Thus he taught his immediate disciples, as they were able to bear it, and loved them to the end, notwithstanding their mistakes and infirmities. And thus he said to his hearers; Learn of *me*, for I am meek and lowly in heart. Does he not refer to himself in these attributes as a motive, as well as an example? As much as to say, “You need not be afraid to place yourselves under my care—I will deal tenderly with you.”

—There is also the efficiency of his tuition. None teaches like him. Other masters teach, but they cannot make their pupils learn. They can improve, but they cannot impart ability: and without some aptitude for an art or science, little progress will be made under the best efforts. What could Handel or Haydn have done with a clown, without any taste or ear for music? But Jesus gives the capacity and the disposition he requires. He furnishes, not only the medium, but the faculty of vision. He makes the blind to see. And though, like the morning, we set off with a few rays only, our path is like that of the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

But what are the instructions He gives! What is all other knowledge compared with this? Ask Paul; he was a man of genius and learning; he did not despise science—yet he exclaims, “Yea, doubtless, and I



count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Of other knowledge we may be destitute, and yet safe. But this is life eternal. Other knowledge leaves us as it finds us; yea, it often injures the possessor; and talent caters for depravity. But a man at his feet feels his words to be spirit and life. He is taught to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world." In other cases, "in much wisdom there is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow;" but, "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound." The burden of guilt is removed, and they enter into rest. They cast all their care on Him, who careth for them. Their minds are kept in perfect peace. They can not only bear, but enjoy solitude. Even in the midst of trouble they are revived; and rejoice in hope of the glory of God—How sweet are his words unto their taste! yea, sweeter than honey to their mouth!

No wonder, therefore, the disciple prizes his privilege: and cannot be seduced from his Master's feet. He has been taught the truth as it is in Jesus! He knows the truth; and the truth has made him free. And, therefore, upon the question, when others are offended, "Will ye also go away?" he answers, with Peter—Where can we do so well? Lord, to whom shall we go? To sin? That hath ruined us. To the world? That has deceived us. To the heathen philosophers? Their foolish hearts are darkened. To the Chief Priests and Pharisees? They are the blind leading the blind. To the Law? That roars, and flames despair. To Moses? He wrote of Thee. To thee gave all the Prophets witness. Lord, to whom should we go, but unto thee? *Thou* hast the words of eternal life.

## APRIL 26.—EVENING.

“Willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” 2 COR. v. 8.

IT seems impossible to read these words and not admit that Paul and his companions believed three things—That they were complex beings, and had spirits which *could* be present with the Lord when absent from the body—That there was an intermediate state between death and the resurrection, so that as soon as they were absent from the body they *were* present with the Lord—And that their being present with the Lord was the completion of their happiness and their hope.

Hence their wish. It was not an absolute desire, but a preference. Their state here under the influence of Divine grace admitted of comfort, and demanded gratitude. But to depart to be with Christ was far better. They were therefore “willing *rather* to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.”

This seems to have been very much in the beginning of the Gospel a common experience. Hence we read of looking for that blessed hope; waiting for his Son from heaven; loving his appearing; hasting unto the coming of the day of God; and crying, Amen; even so, come, Lord Jesus. Those also who were called by Divine grace at the reformation in Germany, and at the revival of evangelical religion in our own country, seemed familiar with death; were not shocked to be reminded of their age and infirmities; and loved to talk with each other of going home.

Yet all cannot receive this saying. Even the subjects of redemption are said to be, through fear of death, all their lifetime not actually in bondage, but

subject to it. The desire of death cannot be natural; nature must abhor its own dissolution. Yet what is impossible to nature is possible to grace. We commonly find more of this willingness to leave the world among the poor and afflicted of the Saviour's followers: they have much to wean, as well as to draw: their consolations correspond with their sufferings: and the Lord is found a *very* present help in trouble. When the love of life can subserve no important purpose, it declines; and the fear of death commonly diminishes as the event approaches. Thousands who often trembled before, have at last been joyful in glory, and shouted aloud upon their beds. Clouds and darkness have obscured their day: but at even-tide it has been light.

All believers have *cause* enough, if they knew it, to make them long for their removal. For to die is gain, unspeakable and everlasting gain. They then exchange faith for sight: and hope for possession: and that which is in part for that which is perfect.

And the apprehension of many of the Lord's people regards the manner of their departure rather than the effect. The parting scene; the pains, the groans, the dying strife; the separation of soul and body, and the consignment of the flesh to corruption and worms; all this leads them to say, with good Dr. Conyers, I am not afraid of death, but of dying.

And indeed all real Christians must long for the consequences: in being fully like their Saviour; and able to serve him, and to enjoy him completely. But they resemble the man whose beloved family is abroad. He would rather therefore be with them—But while he feels the attraction, he shudders at the sea and the

sickness. Watts represents the believer as *loving* the Canaan beyond, but dreading the Jordan between.

Well, if you really *love* the heaven of the Christian, that is, a heaven derived from being present with the Lord; fear not, but thank God and take courage. Either you will have, like the Israelites, a dry-shod march across the river; or if, like Bunyan's pilgrims, you wade through, your feet shall feel the bottom, and your eyes shall see the shining ones ready to receive you on shore. Your passage will be safe and short; and the issue an abundant entrance into the joy of your Lord.

" 'Tis pleasant to believe his grace,  
But we would rather see;  
We would be absent from the flesh,  
And present, Lord, with thee."

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APRIL 27.—MORNING.

"Members one of another." ROM. xii. 5.

ALL mankind are joined together by a connexion which only death can dissolve. The remoteness of the situation in which we are placed does not hinder this connexion, but rather strengthens it. We see this in the traffic of different nations, and their mutual exchange of commodities. The inhabitants of one region cultivate the productions of the ground, and produce articles of manufacture, for the use of those of another; and those of another do the same in return for them; and we sometimes find the four quarters of the globe in the furniture of one house, or the

provisions of one table. The sea, which seemed likely to separate the dwellers upon earth, has, in the progress of science and arts, rendered them accessible to each other; and navigation has become the principal medium of trade.

There are various distinctions in life; and the Scripture does not discountenance them. Neither are we to view them as selfish, or terminating only in the advantage of the superior ranks. The lowest are useful, as well as the highest. The rich benefit the poor; and the poor labour for the rich. The king is the protector of his subjects; and every subject contributes to the support of the king: the king is served by the labour of the field. There is no such thing as independence; and were it not for ignorance and pride, we should never think of it. The under ranks are even the basis of the community; the lowest parts of the wall sustain the higher. The more we rise and possess, the less claim have we to independence; as a larger building requires more support than a smaller. A nobleman employs a thousand hands; a peasant wants but two—and these are his own.

—If this reasoning be true as to men, it is more so as to Christians. And it is in this light Paul so frequently and largely speaks of it—"I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." To shew how important it is to display a mutual dependence, he remarks—"The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are



necessary." They have all their respective places and uses. Each is necessary; necessary to each, and necessary to the whole; necessary to the beauty, the strength, the happiness, the perfection of the whole—Why, then, should we set at naught a brother?

Yet the harmony is often broken, and a schism found in the body. The Christian Church would never have been reduced to its present disjointed state, if the members had not been beguiled from the simplicity that is in Christ. The first wrong step took them to a distance from the Spirit; and as though Christ had been divided, and had imparted himself and his Gospel to some, exclusively of others; the names of creatures become noted as the sources from which particular doctrines were derived, and by whom particular modes of discipline were established. The words the Holy Ghost used were less regarded than the words which man's wisdom teacheth. The worthy name by which Christians were originally called was no longer sufficient. They ranged themselves under different leaders, and called out "Rabbi;" forgetting who had forbidden this; and that one was their Master, even Christ, while all they were only brethren. Hence feuds and animosities followed; and the professors of meekness itself learned to bite and devour one another. The consequences of such measures are known and felt even at the present day: and though much of the violence of religious parties has subsided, distinctions unscriptural and unnecessary (in the degree, at least) are supported: and though all hold the same Head, the members of one communion often look for no more honour and assistance from those of another, than if they were not of the body.

But "if the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?" "But now are they many members, yet but one body;" "that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

—Christians are not only as so many members in a natural body, but as so many members in a civil, or domestic state. However different and distant they were by nature from each other, an effectual method has been taken by Divine Grace to bring them together. They are reconciled in one body by the Cross. They are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. Therefore they are one in Christ, by obligation, as well as by connexion and dependence. Christ over his own house, has a right to enact a law, for the well-ordering and governing of those placed under him. This law is clearly contained in the Scripture; and vain is every other proof of our belonging to him, unless we obey it. And what says he? "Then are ye my disciples, if ye love one another." According to this, we must not live to ourselves—Each is to live for the good of each, and of all. Even a gratification, harmless in itself, is to be avoided, if the peace of a weak conscience will thereby be destroyed. Such was

the example of Paul. Such was the example of Jesus —“Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification: for even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.”

## APRIL 27.—EVENING.

“The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.” 1 SAM. xvii. 37.

THESE are the words of David when he would justify himself from presumption in fighting with Goliath who was defying the armies of the living God. It is observable that he acknowledges the *Lord* to be his deliverer. *He* delivered me; *he* will deliver me. “Salvation belongeth unto the Lord.” To him it belongeth supremely, and in a sense only. For though we have many deliverers, they only deliver us instrumentally. The means he employs often conceal his agency, but they should lead us to it: for instrumentality implies and requires agency. Adaptation is not efficiency. However suited a pen is to write, it is nothing without a hand to use it—Hence the question, “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?” In a state of nature men are a kind of atheists: whatever be their speculative belief, they are practically without God in the world; God is not in all their thoughts. In conversion they are awakened from this dreadful insensibility and indifference; and are led to inquire after God: and they not only seek him, but find him; and not only find him, but hold communion with him; and hold communion

with him, not only in his word, but in his works, not only in his ordinances, but in his dispensations. They connect him with the events of life, and this gives them a sacred importance. They connect him with their trials, and this softens them. They connect him with their comforts, and this sweetens them. And thus life becomes a continued walking with him to-wards that world in which "God is all in all."

David reviews his former agency—The Lord *delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear*. This happened when he kept his father's sheep. Each of these fierce and dreadful creatures took a lamb out of the flock. And he went after them. The peril was most imminent. When he forced them to drop the prey, they *rose against him*; but he caught them by the beard and smote them and slew them. He well therefore speaks of their *paw*, for it was actually upon him! This it will be allowed was a deliverance little less than miraculous. *We* have nothing perhaps so extraordinary to review; yet we have had our deliverances, and some of them remarkable, at least to ourselves, if not to others. We have had our bears and lions; but we have not been given over a prey to their teeth. We have had spiritual deliverances. We have been saved from the curse of the law; from the power of Satan; from the tyranny of the world; from the dominion of sin. We have had temporal deliverances. Some of these have been visible, but many more have been invisible; and it is owing to our having obtained help of God, that our lives, and families, and substance, and all our outward estate, have been preserved. And if at any time our comforts have been invaded and injured, it has been

for a moral benefit; and he has enabled us to say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

David hopes for his future agency—"He *will* deliver me from this Philistine." For after the beasts of prey, here is another, and more formidable foe. We must always rejoice with trembling; and never boast ourselves of to-morrow, for we know not what a day may bring forth. Because some storms have expended themselves, we must not reckon upon perpetual sunshine; the clouds return after the rain. When we have slain the lion and the bear, we may be called to encounter Goliath—Well—and we may meet him undismayed if the Lord be with us. He who *has* delivered *will* deliver. And like David—

We should draw confidence from reflection. We have not only his promise to encourage us, but our experience; and because he has been our help, therefore under the shadow of his wing should we rejoice. We cannot certainly infer what men will be from what they have been, or what they will do from what they have done. They are variable; but the Lord *changeth* not. They may become unable, if their intentions are the same; but in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. Neither should a sense of our unworthiness weaken our expectation from him: we were unworthy when he first took knowledge of us; and he deals with us not according to our desert, but his own mercy and grace.

Wherefore let us observe the lovingkindnesses of the Lord, and treasure them up in our minds. We know not what occasion we may have for the use of them. But in every tendency to depression let us not yield to our infirmity; but remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.



## APRIL 28.—MORNING.

“When Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father—” JOHN xiii. 1.

—“*HIS hour*” means the period of his death. In another place it is called the hour of his enemies—“This,” said he, “is *your* hour and the power of darkness.” It is called *their* hour, because they seemed to have every thing their own way. They apprehended him; and mocked him; and scourged him; and nailed him to the cross. All their purposes and wishes succeeded; and they considered his cause as annihilated. But their triumph was short and foolish. What they had done was provided for; was admitted into his plan; and the very means of accomplishing his design—

—It was “*His hour*.” He was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. There was nothing casual in his death. The time was appointed; and till this arrived the attempts of his adversaries were vain—“They could not lay hands on him, because his hour was not yet come.” It was not only *his* hour by appointment, but by importance. No such hour had been witnessed since time had commenced. No hour of his own life would bear a comparison with it. It was infinitely unique, wonderful, and interesting in its design and effects. Now was the judgment of this world. Now was the prince of this world cast out. Now was the ceremonial law abolished. Now was the moral law magnified and made honourable. Now he was to finish transgression. Now he was to bring in everlasting righteousness. Now he was to open the kingdom of heaven to all

believers. Now he was to get himself a Name above every name.

—He *knew* that his hour was come. So perfect was his foresight of the event, that he knew not only the fact itself, but the incidents attending it. He knew the whole before there was any appearance of the thing: before his enemies had formed the design; before Judas had felt the thought of treason. And thus he evinced, not only his wisdom, but his devotedness to his work. He saw the hour was at hand, but he seeks no hiding-place, nor attempts to escape, though he had so many means in his power. It does not affect this to say, that in another sense he was unable to have released himself, because he was bound by covenant engagement; and if he saved others, himself he could not save. For his engagement was made in the full prospect of all he was to endure; and, as the tremendous suffering approached, so far was He from repenting of what he had brought upon himself, that he said, "How am I straitened till it be accomplished!"

—But how is His passage through this dreadful scene expressed? "That he should depart out of this world unto the Father." Here let us think of his people as well as of himself. In all things he must have the pre-eminence: but they resemble him. What is here said of his death, will, in a pleasing degree, apply to their own. Their death is not, indeed, like his, mediatorial. Neither know they the hour when it will take place. But all their times are in God's hand. And the circumstances of their death, as well as of their life, fall under his arrangement. They know they have their hour; and are immortal till it arrives. They know that enemies cannot hasten it; that friends cannot retard it. They know also that

it is approaching; that it cannot be far off; that it may be very near—and therefore that it requires a constant readiness.

But was *his* death a “departing out of this world?” So is theirs. He was in it for three-and-thirty years. Many of them are in it a shorter, and many a much longer period. It was a sad world to him. It knew him not, but despised and rejected him. It hated him without a cause. It persecuted him from his birth, refused him a place where to lay his head, and could not be satisfied till it had shed his blood. And *they* find it a vain and deceitful world; a vexing and injurious world: a vile and wicked world. Every thing in it cries, Arise, and depart hence; for this is not your rest, because it is polluted. And are we unwilling to go? Yes—

“Thankless for favours from on high,  
Man thinks he fades too soon;  
Though 'tis his privilege to die,  
Would he improve the boon.

“But he, not wise enough to scan  
His best concerns aright,  
Would gladly stretch life's little span  
To ages if he might—

“To ages in a world of pain—  
To ages, where he goes,  
Gall'd by affliction's heavy chain,  
And hopeless of repose.

“Strange fondness of the human heart,  
Enamour'd of its harm!  
Strange world, that costs it so much smart,  
And yet has power to charm!”

We do not wonder, indeed, that this should be so much the case with “men of the world.” They have

“their portion in this life,” and no hope of a better. Bad as it is, they know that it is the best world they will ever be in; and that, whatever be its troubles, to them they are only the beginnings of sorrows. But it is otherwise with Christians. They are here, like Israel in Egypt; and death is their departure for the Land of Promise. They are here, like strangers in an inhospitable country, and travellers at a cheerless inn; and death is their departing to their delightful home.

Was *his* death a “going to the Father?” So is theirs. That is, going to heaven; for the Father is there: and in his presence there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore. He went to the Father, to carry on their cause, and to possess his own reward. But he had been there before. Hence he said, “I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father.” Hence he speaks of heaven, without wonder. He had been at court. He had resided there; and had only left it for a season. His return, with all the glories that should follow, was the joy set before him, for which he endured the cross. And, as love delights in the welfare of its object, he expected that his disciples would rejoice, when he said, “I go unto the Father; for the Father is greater than I.” But they were never there before: all will be new and surprising to them. Yet they, also, will have their work; and will be still praising him. They, also, will drink of the rivers of his pleasure. They will have immediate and uninterrupted access to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God. And with Him is the fountain of life.

## APRIL 28.—EVENING.

“So that I might finish my course with joy.” ACTS xx. 24.

DOES this imply any apprehension as to the event? It is no more than he enjoins upon others: “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” It certainly expresses great desire and great anxiousness. He deemed nothing too much to do or to suffer for such a privilege.

But how is it to be understood? We may take two views of it. We may consider the Christian as finishing his course with joy to others, and with joy to himself. The latter is principally intended. But did you ever stand by the side of a dying bed, and when your connexion was suffering severely, and all hope of recovery was taken away, have you not been glad when the struggle was over? Yes. You rose above selfishness; and could say, “Our loss is his gain. Shall we weep at his deliverance from sorrow, temptation, and sin? and his entering into the joy of his Lord? If we loved him we should rejoice, because he said, I go unto the Father.”

And when he finished well, have you not hailed him on another account? “Well, thy sun is gone down without a cloud. I feared for thee, but the danger is now over. Thou hast had to go through a defiling world, but thou hast kept thy garments clean. Thou hast had fears within and fightings without; but thy heart has not turned back, neither have thy steps declined from his way. We crown thee now. Servant of God, well done.”

But when the Christian finishes his course with joy,



it mainly refers to himself, and regards his dying experience. There is a great difference in the departure of believers. Some reach heaven, so to speak, in a kind of wrecked state; they get safe to land, but on planks and broken pieces of the ship. Others, in full sail, enter the desired haven; and have, as the Apostle Peter calls it, "an abundant entrance into the kingdom of their Lord and Saviour." Some die perplexed with doubts and depressed with fears; others have the full assurance of hope: they are joyful in glory, and shout aloud upon their beds; and their dying chamber is none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven. "With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the King's palace."

This joy does not depend upon outward things; for in common God's poor and afflicted people have the greatest degrees of it. Neither is it according to previous confidence; for many who have been all their lifetime *subject* to bondage through fear of death, have been filled at last with all joy and peace in believing. Now we lay no stress upon the want of this dying confidence and comfort, as an evidence against the safety of a man, when his life has been godly and consistent; for we know not how far it may be the effect of temperament or disease. Yet it is very desirable to enjoy it. We shall need all the comfort we can get when heart and flesh fail us, and friends can afford us no assistance, and the enemy of souls may be peculiarly busy, knowing that his time is short. It is also very useful. It has often impressed the careless, confirmed the doubting, and encouraged the timid. And how has it glorified God by shewing the power of his grace, and recommending his service!

Except for this, a Christian would desire a sudden death, and escape "the pains, and groans, and dying strife:" but he is more than reconciled to bear them, if Christ is thus magnified in his body by death, as well as by life.

But this finishing his course with joy takes in the issue as well as the conclusion. If it ends with heaven, it ends well, whatever be the experience immediately preceding. If the Christian were to leave this world in darkness and uncertainty, that darkness would be instantly dispelled, and all would be quietness and assurance for ever. Thus even Cowper finished his course with joy, for he ended it in joy; the gloom vanished in glory—and how ecstatic must have been the surprise of his blessed spirit, to feel itself in the possession of a boon it had long despaired to find!

All who have gone before us at death finished their course; but many finished it with joy. How will you finish yours? The Lord has appointed us bounds which we cannot pass. We have an allotted course of service and suffering; and the end is sure—and the end is nigh. Mark the perfect man and behold the upright, for the end of *that* man is peace. *He* shall enter into rest; and be for ever with the Lord. But how will *you* end? will you be defeated or crowned? will you be clothed with shame, or shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of our Father? O let it be your prayer and care to realize this final blessedness: and endeavour to judge of every thing now as it will affect you at *last*.

Even a Balaam could admire the tents of Jacob and the tabernacles of Israel; and was compelled to exclaim, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Yet he died fighting

against the people he had blessed and envied. Such a difference is there between conviction and practice; and so absurd is it to look for the end without the way.

Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord. But if you die out of him, unpardoned and unrenewed, you must finish your course with grief—Grief to others; to ministers, to Christians, to godly friends and relations.—Grief to yourselves. The sorrows of life may be diverted by company, by amusements, by the hurry of business. A man may drink and forget his sorrow, and remember his misery no more. But your drinking days will be then over, and you will be near a state where you will call in vain for a drop of water to cool your tongue. Your associates will then forsake you, or be found miserable comforters. If they are cruel enough to jest about religion then, you will not be able to relish it, while fearing that all may be true which you have treated as false. Nature will have then closed the door against every worldly diversion. You can no more attend the playhouse and the race-ground. All that before was vanity will now be vexation of spirit. Riches profit not in the day of wrath. What is a man profited if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? But should you have no time for reflection; or be incapable of exercising reason; or conscience be unawakened; should you through the power of delusion have no bands in your death, and your strength be firm: should you fall asleep like a lamb, you will awake with the devil and his angels. There is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked.

## APRIL 29.—MORNING.

"And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him." LUKE xxii. 43.

THUS, though the cup was not taken from him, he was heard, in that he feared; according to the promise: "I have heard thee in a time accepted; and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee." We may be heard, when we are not delivered. We may be succoured in distress, when we are not saved from it. And if the burden be not diminished, yet, if our ability to endure it be increased, the effect is the same. Paul was a proof of this. When he besought the Lord thrice, that the thorn in the flesh might depart from him, the Saviour said, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. And says David, In the day that I cried, Thou answeredst me; and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.

—Here we see the humiliation of the Saviour. He who was rich, for our sakes became poor. He was in the form of God, but took upon him the form of a servant. He was Lord of all, but had not where to lay his head; and was relieved by the creatures of his power: "Certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, ministered unto him of their substance." He was the Lord of angels; but he was made a little lower than they—yea, he received assistance from them. "There appeared unto him an angel from heaven, strengthening him."

—What a contrast is here! His Apostles, who had

been so much honoured by him, forsook him. Even Peter, James, and John, who had been admitted to the Transfiguration, and now were selected to be with him in the garden, slumbered and slept. And though, when he came to them, and found them in this condition, he pitied them, and said, The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak; yet he felt it—deeply felt it; and said, “What! could ye not watch with me one hour?”—But if earth disowns him, heaven does not. If men abandon him, angels cry, with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb!—“He was seen of angels.” One of them announced his approaching conception; another proclaimed his birth; a multitude of them carolled his advent. In his temptation in the wilderness, “behold, angels came and ministered unto him.” An angel rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and said to the women, “Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here.” “Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” And here an angel appeared unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

He could have asked the Father, and he would have given him twelve legions of angels, and rescued him—what are we saying? *One* of these would have been sufficient—the least of them could have looked all his adversaries into nothing—But how then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? And how could he have put away sin by the sacrifice of himself? Or how could he have sympathised with us, if he had never suffered? The angel, therefore, only *strengthened him*. Reminding him of the joy that was set before him: telling him of the result of his passion—the effect of it in the glory of God, and the salvation of the world: spreading before him the pro-



mises—perhaps reading to him the prophecy of Isaiah: “When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied”—Raising him up from the cold ground; supporting his fainting head; wiping away the bloody sweat from his dear face—so that he appeared fresh, and fair, and glorious, in his visage: and made those who came to apprehend him go backward, and fall to the earth, when he only presented himself, and said, “I am he.”

In all things he has the pre-eminence; and how willing are his people to acknowledge it! But while he is the first-born among many brethren, all of them are predestinated to be conformed to him. Angels, therefore, who attended him, attended them also. “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto them that are the heirs of salvation?” Their attendance is no less real than formerly, though it is no longer visible; according to the principle of the economy under which we live, and which is, to walk by faith, and not by sight. They delight to do the will of their Lord and ours. These blessed beings have no envy, no pride. They are enemies to his enemies; but they are friends to his friends. They rejoice when a sinner repenteth; and carry the dying saint into Abraham’s bosom.

## APRIL 29.—EVENING.

“Who comforteth us in all our tribulation.” 2 Cor. i. 4.

THIS reminds us of the nature of the Christian life. It is “neither clear nor dark.” It partakes both of tribulation and comfort. The tribulation endears the comfort; and the comfort relieves and gilds the tribulation.

Paul does not say He comforts us by keeping us out of all tribulation. He could do this; but it accords not with the wisdom of his mercy. Therefore many are the afflictions of the righteous, and through much tribulation they must enter the kingdom. But *while* in the world they have tribulation, in him they have peace—and he comforts them IN ALL THEIR TRIBULATION. And he does this four ways.

First, by deliverance. This is perhaps the most pleasing way to our natural feelings: and these feelings are in a measure allowable. For tribulation is not to be preferred for its own sake: neither are we to consider ourselves unsubmitive, though we are led to say, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;” provided we can add, “nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.” And the Lord knoweth how to deliver. If he does not find a way, he can make a way for our escape. Of old he appeared for his servants; and often constrained even their enemies to acknowledge the finger of God. Observe Joseph in Egypt, Jonah in the whale’s belly, Daniel in the lions’ den, and Peter in prison. “But these were miracles.” They were. “And miracles are not to be expected now.” They are not. But he who performed them is not far from any one of us—He is a

very present help in trouble—and able to make good the word upon which he has caused us to hope; or miracles would be seen again. Nothing is too hard for the Lord; all hearts are in his hand; all events are at his control; and even now “he turneth the shadow of death into the morning.” He does not always deliver us according to our wishes and expectation; and hope deferred maketh the heart sick; and the eagerness and despondency of impatience may lead us to complain, “O when wilt thou comfort me?” But the vision is only for an appointed time; at the end it shall speak; neither will it tarry a moment beyond the season our welfare requires—“For the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for him.”

Secondly, by compensation. Philosophers have remarked how all through the natural world there are indications of a system of counter-balancings; so that a deficiency in one thing is remedied by some advantage in another. We see this also in human life; so that persons in their trouble are, so to say, recompensed by something which lessens the impression of their trials, and after which if they are wise they will look, for the purpose of submission and thankfulness. Hannah was barren and reproached by her fruitful rival; but she was consoled by the greater love of her husband, and who “was better to her than ten sons.” Mephibosheth while an infant was lamed on both his feet; but owing to this accident his life was preserved when the other princes of the house were destroyed. Thus bodily deformity is sometimes relieved by superior endowments of mind. Thus a man is compelled to labour: but this gives soundness to his sleep, and appetite to his food, and vigour to his health, to which

the easy and *indulged* are strangers. Paul suffered unto bonds; but the word of God, which was dearer to him than life, was not bound: and his confinement turned out rather to the furtherance of the Gospel. The thorn in the flesh was continued; but instead of the removal he had the assurance of all-sufficient grace under it; and he was more than satisfied with the compensation—yea, he gloried in it; and said “When I am weak then am I strong.” Ah! I dreaded, says the Christian, as I entered the affliction, and was laid on a bed of languishing: but prayer was made for me, a force and a tenderness of friendship were displayed of which I was not aware before—and Oh! how kind was that “Friend who sticketh closer than a brother!”—“*Thou* drewest near in the day that I called upon thee; *thou* saidst unto me, fear not.”

Thirdly, by sanctification. A man may be saved in his affliction when he is not saved out of it. Affliction is a scene of great moral danger, and the enemy of souls will endeavour to turn to account what it yields in a way of temptation. It is mentioned with wonder that in all the evil that had come upon him, “Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.” A Christian is sometimes “afraid of all his sorrows”—afraid lest he should *sink*—afraid lest he should *sin* in the day of adversity—afraid lest he should not suffer well, and glorify the Lord in the fires; but dishonour his religion by unbelief, and discontent, and murmuring. This leads him to pray; and the Lord hears him, and *keeps* him in the evil day. He affords him also the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, which confirms his faith, and strengthens his patience, and enables him to bear the rod. Some in their distresses have cursed God and died. Others have spoken unad-

visedly with their lips; or they have been vengeful towards the instruments of their sufferings, or they have employed unlawful means to obtain relief, or they have attempted self-destruction. Have you been preserved? Has the furnace only severed the dross from the gold? Has the pruning-knife only lopped off the suckers that robbed the vine? Can you say with David, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy word"—Has the Lord forgotten to be gracious to you?

Fourthly, he does it by discovery. "The word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah the second time, while he was yet shut up in the court of the prison, saying; Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." This is no more than he does to other sufferers; it is in the hour of trouble he peculiarly fulfils the promise, "I will manifest myself unto him." "I will allure her," says he, "and bring her into the wilderness, and *there* will I speak comfortably unto her"—so speak to her as to "give her her vineyards from *thence*, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope, and she shall sing *there* as in the days of her youth, and in the days when she came up out of the land of Egypt." Oh! if he says to the soul, "I am thy salvation;" if he "shews you his covenant;" if he convinces you that none of your trials are casual or penal; if he assures your consciences that you are redeemed from the curse, and that you only feel the rod of a father, who uses it in kindness and tender mercy; if heaven be opened to the eye of the mind, and like Stephen you see Jesus ready to receive you, and wipe away all your tears; if you are assured that your afflictions will work



out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory—then, though you will not be deprived of feeling, you will be raised above despondency and depression—Then, though troubled on every side, you will not be distressed—Then, though sorrowful, you will be always rejoicing—and not only so, but you “will glory in tribulation also.”

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## APRIL 30.—MORNING.

“But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.”

MARK xvi. 7.

THESE are the words of the angel who had descended from heaven to attend his rising Lord. They were addressed to Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome. These women had honoured the Saviour, and he honoured them. They were the first to receive the announcement of his resurrection, and the first to report it.

But observe,—they were to carry the news, not to the Chief Priests and Pharisees; not to Pilate; not to Herod. It was just to leave these men in the darkness they loved. They rebelled against the light; and no evidence would have convinced those who had already seen his miracles, and believed not. But his disciples, though timid, and weak, and imperfect, were sincere. They had forsaken all to follow him. Their very doubting arose from the greatness of their love; and sorrow had now filled their hearts. They would, therefore, welcome the intelligence, and be influenced by it, as his followers and witnesses.

—But why is Peter distinctively mentioned? Be-

cause he was the chief of the Apostles? So far from it, the distinction reminds us of his humiliation. He had fallen by his iniquity; and, after the most solemn warnings and professions, he had denied his Master, with oaths and curses. But the look in the judgment-hall had broken his heart, and made him go out, and weep bitterly. He was now on the verge of despair, and ready to say—perhaps was even now saying—Ah, he will disown me—and righteously disown me—for ever! The angel's *naming* him, therefore, on this occasion, was as much as to say, "The Saviour has not cast thee off; he has not forgotten to be gracious. He does not break a bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, but will send forth judgment unto victory." It also conveyed an intimation to his brethren, that they were to follow his example, and endeavour to restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering themselves lest they also were tempted.

—The message, more than announcing his resurrection, added, that he would go before them into Galilee. In vain we ask, how he passed thither. He had the power to appear, and disappear; and to transport himself from place to place, as he pleased, in a moment of time. But what led him down so many miles from Jerusalem? Was it to intimate his forsaking that guilty city? Woe unto you when I depart from you!—Or was it to call them off from the strife and cruelties of their enemies? It was comparatively a place of security and concealment. Or was it, that their journeying down separately, or with each other, might bring them to recollection, and recover them from their late cowardice and unbelief? Was it to tell them to withdraw, in order to be in the way of intercourse with him? It was a despised place—would he

teach them to rise above local and vulgar prejudices; and to call nothing common or unclean? It is certain that he had been much in Galilee himself; and had many followers there. And this accounts for the largeness of the assembly; for the Apostles would naturally inform his friends there of this expected interview. Hence he was now seen of above five hundred brethren at once; many of whom were living when Paul wrote to the Corinthians, though some had fallen asleep.

—His promise that they should see him there, would prove a test of their faith and affection. If they valued the sight of him, and believed his word, they would certainly repair thither. Accordingly they did repair thither; and there was He!—Let us apply this to ourselves. There are means and ordinances which he has established. In these he has engaged to be found of those that seek him. If we rely on his truth, and desire communion with him, we shall gladly avail ourselves of them. And shall we—can we be disappointed—if we do? Has he ever said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me, in vain? He has often been better than his word; but who ever found him worse? Let us go, therefore, to his Throne, and to his House, with full and lively expectation—In all places where I record my Name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee; for where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them. There shall we see him, as he has said unto us.

—He is also gone before us into heaven. Let us arise, and depart hence, and seek him *there*—*There* shall we see him in all his glory, according to his

promise—Where I am, there shall also my servants be. Oh! to join him there! To be for ever with the Lord!

“O glorious hour! O bless'd abode!  
I shall be near, and like my God:  
And flesh and sin no more control  
The sacred pleasures of my soul.”

## APRIL 30.—EVENING.

“The desire of all nations.” HAGGAI ii. 7.

THAT this refers to the Messiah is unquestionable. Yet there seems some necessity for explaining the title, as it apparently disagrees with the language of other parts of Scripture, and with fact. Is he not despised and rejected of men? He was in the world, and the world was made by him; and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. How then can he be called the desire of all nations? The character is justified five ways.

First, by the general expectation that prevailed in the world previously to his advent. It is well known that there was such a looking out for some great deliverer and benefactor as nigh at hand. Divines have collected many testimonies from heathen authors, and have peculiarly remarked a little poem of Virgil's, written a few years only before the birth of Jesus, and which contains a kind of prophecy, foreshowing that some extraordinary personage would shortly come, and restore the peace and plenty and blessings of the fancied golden reign. The sentiment had been conveyed down by tradition, but it was originally derived from a Divine source, the early and repeated promise of “him that should come.”

Secondly, by the need all mankind had of such a Saviour as he was to be. The whole world was lying in wickedness. Darkness covered the earth. They knew not the supreme good. They found only vanity and vexation of spirit in their pursuits and attainments. They had no support under the troubles of life. Their uneasiness arising from guilt, death, and futurity, made them often willing not only to offer thousands of rams, and rivers of oil, but to give their first-born for their transgression, the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul. But no remedy could they find to remove the doubts and fears of their consciences—The Lord Jesus meets the condition they were in; and therefore, though they had no revelation of him, yet they were groping ignorantly after what alone he could impart; and therefore he deserves to be called the desire of all nations, just as a physician, able and willing to cure all diseases, is the desire of all patients.

Thirdly, by being entirely attractive in himself, so that all would actually long after him if they knew him. He has every excellency in his person, every perfection in his character. There is nothing in creation that will afford a proper image of his glory. All the loveliness of men and angels shrink from a comparison with his charms—"How great is his beauty!"—"Yea, he is altogether lovely." Do we esteem riches? His riches are unsearchable. Do we admire friendship? He is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Do we applaud benevolence? His love passeth knowledge. He comes down like rain on the mown grass, as showers that water the earth. A bruised reed will he not break, and smoking flax will



he not quench. He delivers the needy when he crieth, the poor also and him that hath no helper—

“His worth if all the nations knew,  
Sure the whole earth would love him too.”

Fourthly, by his having had admirers in every country. Wherever believers have been found, they have been all distinguished by the same convictions and dispositions with regard to him. Abraham in Canaan rejoiced to see his day, saw it and was glad. Job in the land of Uz said, I know that my Redeemer liveth. Moses in Egypt esteemed his reproach. Wise men came from Persia and paid him homage. Devout men from every nation under heaven came to the temple at Jerusalem, and joined in the ceremonies and sacrifices of which he was the substance and the end. And John heard his praise from a multitude which no man could number, out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues. For,

Lastly, he is so named, because in due time he will be prized and glorified in by all the ends of the earth. To him, said the dying Patriarch, shall the gathering of the people be. He is the salvation, says Simeon, prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel. All kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him: all nations shall call him blessed.

But let me not lose myself in general reflections. How does this desire of all nations appear to me? Has he been revealed in me the hope of glory? Is he all my salvation and all my desire? Can I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord? Do I love the people

who resemble him? Do I value the ordinances in which I can enjoy communion with him? Will it complete my happiness to be like him and see him as he is?

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## MAY 1.—MORNING

“And I will give her her vineyards from thence.”

HOSEA ii. 15.

—OBSERVE the Author of these favours—I will do it, says God. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from him. And his people will readily acknowledge that all they enjoy is not only from his agency, but his grace.

—Observe also the richness of the supplies—I will give her—not her corn—corn is for necessity, but grapes—grapes are for delight. Yea, it is not a vine—but a vineyard—yea, vineyards! He engages to give, as if he could not do too much for them; being concerned—not only for their safety, but for their welfare—not only for their relief, but their enjoyment—and not only for their tasting his consolation, but their being filled with all joy and peace in believing.

—Observe also the strangeness of the way in which these indulgences are to be communicated. For *whence* are these supplies to come? From a *wilderness*. “I will allure her, and bring her into the *wilderness*, and speak comfortably unto her: and I will give her her vineyards from *thence*.” What could be looked for in a wilderness but loneliness, and mazes, and danger, and beasts of prey, and reptiles, and sand, and briers, and thorns—Who would expect to find the vineyards of Engedi there? “He only doeth wondrous things; he is God alone.”

He turneth the shadow of death into the morning. He makes rivers in high places, and streams in the desert. He makes the wilderness to rejoice and blossom as the rose—and gives us vineyards from *thence*.

The region through which his people passed in their way from Egypt to Canaan was a wilderness. Here read the words of Jeremiah: "Who led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, and of the shadow of death, through a land which no man passed through, and where no man dwelt." Moses also calls it, That terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought; where there was no water. But he gave them their vineyards from thence. Though the place yielded them nothing, they were well supplied from above. Though they had no rivers or springs, he smote the rock, and the waters gushed out, and followed them in all their journeyings. Though they had no food, the clouds poured down manna, and they did eat angels' food. Though they had no road, they had a guide to lead them the right way, in a pillar of cloud and of fire, which shaded them by day and comforted them at night. The tabernacle of God was in the midst of them. From the mercy-seat he communed with them. He sent them Moses and Aaron, and Miriam. He gave his good Spirit to instruct them. They had grapes from Eshcol. They had a view of the glory of all lands; and at length the possession of it—where they sang—"To him that led his people through the Wilderness; for his mercy endureth for ever!"

—Earth is a wilderness. And he gives them their vineyards from thence. It was not designed to be a wilderness. But, by one man, sin entered into the world; and it was said unto the transgressor, "Cursed

is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee"—and there are enough of these. Such it is as the Fall left it. Such it now would be, but for Divine grace. How discontented and miserable are the men of the world, who have nothing else! especially in their afflictions—and man is born to trouble. But to the Christian the curse is turned into a blessing. He has not only before him a land of promise, but even now—even here, he has a thousand alleviations, and succours, and even delights. And if earth *be* a wilderness—when they attend divine ordinances; and hear the joyful sound; and embrace the promises; and rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost—they have their vineyards from thence.

Solitude is a wilderness. And he gives them their vineyards from thence. There is not only much to be done alone, but gained alone, and enjoyed alone. There we gain much of our best knowledge, and our richest experience. There we enjoy the freedom of prayer, and the most unreserved intercourse with God. There his secret is with them that fear him; and he shews them his covenant. They are never less alone than when alone. "Go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee." David said, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips, when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches." Nathaniel, under the fig-tree, found something more refreshing than the shade of its leaf; more delicious than the taste of its fruit.

Outward trouble is a wilderness. Many have been afraid to be brought into it—yet He has given them

their vineyards from thence, and the Valley of Achor for a door of hope. They have been saved by their undoing; and enriched by their losses. Manasseh, in his affliction, sought and found the God of his father. And David, though he was converted before, could say, It is good for me that I have been afflicted. What proofs have all his people had that he was with them in trouble! What discoveries! what supports! what tendernesses of comfort have they had there! As the sufferings of Christ have abounded in them, the consolation hath also abounded by Christ.

—The state of mind produced by conviction of sin is a wilderness. A wounded spirit who can bear? Who does not remember the surprise, the confusion of mind, the terror, the anguish, the self-despair, he once felt—and who can forget the feelings induced by a discovery of the Cross, and the joy of God's salvation! Many are afraid when they see their relations and friends trembling at God's word, and broken in heart at his feet—But Christians hail it as a token for good. They know that he gave *them their vineyards from thence*.

The same may be said of that soul-abasement and distress the believer himself may feel from increasing views of his unworthiness, depravity, and guilt. And this may be the case after he has been for years in the way everlasting, and hoping better things of himself. The experience is truly lamentable: but will the humiliation hurt him? He giveth grace unto the humble. The rain falls upon the mountain-tops, as well as in the valley: but the valleys are fertilized; they are also covered over with corn; they shout for joy; they also sing.

—The valley of the shadow of death is the last wil-



derness. There is much to render it uninviting and awful; and yet, when it has been actually entered, the apprehension and the gloom have fled. This has been the case generally, even with those who were most subject to bondage by the fear of it. The place has been made glad for them. They have had not only a peaceful, but a delightful, entrance into the joy of their Lord. And what vineyards does he give them from THENCE!!

## MAY 1.—EVENING.

“Judas saith unto him (not Iscariot), Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?” JOHN xiv. 22.

JUDAS ISCARIOT had already sold his Master, and was now busy in betraying him into the hands of his enemies. We are sometimes ready to wonder by what potency of diabolical agency he could be carried to such a degree of wickedness. But when we are informed that he was covetous, the mystery is explained. Then we have a cause fully adequate to *any* effect: “for the love of money is the root of all evil.”

But there was another Judas among the Apostles. He was the brother of James; the author of the last inspired epistle of the New Testament; and a faithful follower of Jesus—he was the present inquirer. We may be good and happy under any name. Yet there are names that seem ominous and odious. It must have been painful for this excellent man to be called by the name of the infamous wretch who had sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver. John therefore distinguishes him. We should learn from his example to be careful, in relating facts, not to con-

found persons. For want of an attention to this, what is only true of one individual is applied to another; and not only mistake, but mischief frequently ensues. You can never talk safely after some people: they are sure to *suppress*, or *omit*, or *perplex*. How little is *circumstantial* truth attended to!

It is not always easy to determine the principle of an action. We commonly look for a single cause when perhaps several excitements have operated, though not equally. A late popular senator often said, no man ever acted from a single motive. Whence sprang the question of Judas?

Was it the language of grateful surprise? "How is it that we should be selected? and thus honoured and indulged?" This is the disposition of the subjects of Divine grace. They do not think more highly of themselves, because they are made to differ from others. Not unto us, O Lord; not unto us. Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my father's house?

Or was it the language of doubt? He *seems* to question whether the Lord *could* come and manifest himself to them without others seeing and knowing it. If he really thought so, it was very weak and foolish; but he spake in haste, and without reflection. He might easily have known the possibility, in a thousand cases, of communicating ourselves to a friend while every one else remained ignorant of the transaction. And if others could not do it, was it becoming in Judas to measure the Saviour by their capacity? What is marvellous in their eyes is not marvellous in his. It was enough that he had said it. He never promises what he is not able to perform—

And never should we ask, after any of his declarations, "How can these things be?"

Or was it the language of curiosity? He might have admitted the reality of the thing, but wished to know the circumstances, and the mode of the manifestation. There is too much of this tendency of mind in all of us, so that we leave what is plain and useful, to pry into what is dark and unprofitable; and wish to explore the secret things which belong unto God, instead of being satisfied with those which are revealed, and which are for us and for our children. Thus time is wasted, the attention is drawn off from the main concern, the temper is injured by dispute, and the words of the Apostle verified, "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth." Jesus therefore would not gratify the inquirer after the number of the saved: and when Peter asked him after the destiny of John, he reproved him, saying, "What is that to thee? follow thou me:" and when his Apostles would dive into prophecy, he said, "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put into his own power."

But let us always take things in their most charitable construction. Perhaps it was the language of allowable desire. He felt the condescension and kindness of Jesus: he considered the privilege as an inestimable favour: but having little acquaintance with it, he wished to know more of it, to regulate himself accordingly, so as not to lose, but secure and improve the privilege. This is the more probable, as our Saviour does not blame him, but gives him an answer. This he would not have done had Judas spoken superciliously or impertinently; and not in the spirit of a

learner. He did not answer Pilate; nor indulge Herod; nor suffer those to remain in the room who laughed him to scorn when he raised the ruler's daughter. But he favours and satisfies Judas: "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him"

Hence while we oppose a doubtful, curious, and speculative turn of mind, we should not repulse humble and useful inquiries. There are difficulties of an *experimental* and a *practical* nature with regard to duties and privileges which it is possible and desirable to remove. And there is no one to whom we can carry them so proper as He to whom this inquirer addressed himself—and not in vain.

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## MAY 2.—MORNING,

"A Psalm and Song at the dedication of the house of David."  
Ps. xxx.

THIS he built for himself, as soon as he was established king over Judah and Israel. It was, doubtless, very different from the cottage he occupied when a shepherd. But there was no impropriety in this change. A man may alter his mode of living, with his rising condition in the world. The gradations of life are not discountenanced in the Scriptures; and we have never seen any advantage arising from the neglect of them. Good men ought to avoid extravagance; but by being mean or parsimonious, they may cause their good to be evil spoken of,

David as a king, was obliged to do many things from a regard to his station, rather than from personal choice. Yet godliness is to shew itself in all circumstances. Therefore, when he took possession of his dwelling-house, he consecrated it to God. At entering a new house, an entertainment is often given, and dissipation and excess follow. Many are invited; but God is not of the number: yea, they say unto God, Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. But every thing is to be sanctified by the word of God and prayer. Our religion is to be exemplified in little and common things. We are to sanctify the week, as well as to remember the Sabbath; and to walk with a perfect heart in our own dwellings, as well as to worship in the temple of God. All we have is the Lord's; and nothing is a blessing till he blesses it.

And we know not what may befall us in our new abode. Here our children may be about us; or here we may weep, because they are not. Here we may find a house of mourning, for the desire of our eyes, or the guide of our youth. Here we may enjoy health, or be made to possess months of vanity, and have wearisome nights appointed unto us. Here we may live many years, or our sun may go down at noon—Let it then be our concern that the place may be the house of God while we live, and the gate of heaven when we die.

David was a poet; and was accustomed to indulge his pious genius on any particular occurrence. Here are the lines he composed on the present occasion—  
“I will extol thee, O Lord; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me. O Lord my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.



O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks to the remembrance of his holiness. For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

All we notice here is, that, previously to his occupying this fine mansion, he had been suffering under a dangerous disease. Kings are as mortal as their subjects, and exposed to the same evils of life. And what would a house of cedar be to one who carried into it a body full of pain? But God had recovered him speedily; and, while renewed health enabled him to enjoy the blessings of Providence, Divine Grace taught him to value life as a privilege for religious purposes; prolonging his opportunities to glorify God, and serve his generation according to His will.

Nothing is more interesting than little casual insights into the history, and, above all, the experience of good and great men. And in this ode we see the workings of David's mind—before, and—under, and—after the affliction.

—*Before* the affliction: "And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong"—He had not said this in words; but his views, and feelings, and actions, were all vocal with God. And do we not here see the danger of indulgence? How little can we bear without self security, without presumption, without losing the heart of a stranger! Hence the necessity of changes, and the advantage of those trials that cry to our hearts, "Arise, and depart hence, for this is not your rest."

—*Under* the affliction: "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled. I cried to thee, O Lord; and unto the Lord I made supplication. What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? Shall it declare thy truth? Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me: Lord, be thou my helper." Cain, in his distress, goes to building. Saul sends for music. Few turn to him that smiteth them. But prayer is the design, the sanctification, the resource, of affliction—Is any afflicted? let him pray.

—*After* the affliction: "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; to the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever." He has done it.

"His hand has loos'd my bonds of pain,  
And bound me with his love."

Therefore I will serve him with my best powers, and for ever—

And his practice corresponded with his profession. No sooner had he taken possession of his new palace than "the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the Ark of God dwelleth within curtains." And then it was that he availed himself of a pious and ardent frame of mind, to *swear* unto the Lord, and *vow* unto the mighty God of Jacob. "Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob." How different the dis-

position of the selfish Jews on their return from Babylon! "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?" And what gained they? Them that honour me, says God, I will honour. "Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house."

## MAY 2.—EVENING.

"Ye were a curse." ZECH. viii. 13.

WHEN Elihu asked Job, with regard to the Supreme Being, "If thou sinnest, what dost thou against him?" he adds; "Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art." The injury one man is capable of doing to another is incalculable; and it will never be known in this world what a curse the sinner has been. The corrupt always become, as Isaiah calls them, "*children that are corrupters*." They are concerned to bring others into the same course and condition with themselves; and as, owing to the depravity of our nature, we are much more accessible to evil than to good, they are rarely successful in their endeavours. In addition to their invitations and enticings, and, if they have power, their frowns and menaces; how impressive is the force of example! and how does the presence of vice familiarize it to the mind, and weaken the restraints of fear and shame! "One sinner destroyeth much good."

It seems hard that the wife and children of Achan should have been stoned and burnt with himself. And nothing could have been more affecting than

the sight and cries of these victims of his guilt, especially if he had any feeling, to the man himself. And the Deist here rages against the Bible. But the Bible only records the fact; and the Deist is perpetually meeting with similar things in his own book of nature. He sees what his boasted Omnipotent Goodness does not interfere to prevent,—one suffering from the vileness of another. He sees the wife and children reduced to want, beggary, infamy, disease, death; by an idle, drunken, stealing, licentious husband and father.

This should be one of the greatest preventions of sin, that it always injures, not only ourselves, but others; and it would be so, if we had any ingenuous, noble, relative feeling. But what filial affection has that youth who can break a mother's heart, and bring down the grey hairs of a father with sorrow to the grave? Whatever be his politics, what real patriotism has he who endeavours to arm Providence against his country, and promotes "that sin which is a reproach to any people?" "I cannot exercise a better charity towards others," says Adam of Wintringham, "than by avoiding all sin myself."

As the wicked are "a curse" by injuriousness, so they are also by execration. How many suddenly curse their habitation! How are they cursed often by those who are ruined by their pride, luxury, and speculations! How will children when they meet their ungodly parents rise up against them in the judgment, and cause them to be put to death! How in the world of torment will the seduced execrate the seducer! the murdered the murderer! and the pupil of infidelity the wretch that led him into the paths of the destroyer! How dreadfully did the writer of

this article once hear a fine young man, while dying, exclaim, again and again, "O curse you, Voltaire!"—Angels curse them: "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof"—The Judge of all will curse them—*He* "will say unto them on his left hand, Depart, ye cursed"—

And, Christians, were you ever in danger of this? Were you ever once a curse yourselves. How humbling is the review! What godly sorrow does it call for! It seems enough to make you weep, if possible, tears of blood, to think that there are some in hell, and others going thither whom you have led astray and encouraged! Surely you can never forgive yourselves! But if God has forgiven you, you ought to love much; and be concerned, that as you have been a curse, to become a blessing.

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## MAY 3.—MORNING.

"Ye shall be a blessing." ZECH. viii. 13.

WHAT a difference is there between the state of nature and grace! The transition from the one to the other verifies and explains the words of the prophet: "Instead of the thorn, shall come up the fir tree; and instead of the brier, shall come up the myrtle tree." Hence says God—"As ye were a curse"—"Ye shall be a blessing."

For the change affects them not only personally, but relatively. It begins with themselves, but it extends to others; and a zealous concern for the salvation of their own souls is always accompanied with a



benevolent anxiety for the salvation of their fellow-creatures. Their exertions for this purpose are indeed often ungratefully received; and they are reproachfully desired to keep their religion to themselves. But this is enjoining upon them an impossibility. They cannot but speak the things which they have seen and heard—If these should hold their peace, the stones would cry out—The fire must burn—The spring must rise up. Others are not only excused, but commended—even if they err in the manner, who strive to heal the sick, to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry: but Christians are called intermeddlers when *they* would exercise the noblest charity of all, which is *spiritual mercy*. Not that they neglect the body—Jesus himself did not. But he that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a *soul* from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

David therefore said, “I will teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.” What a blessing was Andrew to his brother Peter! and Philip to his friend Nathanael! and the woman of Samaria to her fellow-citizens!—“Many believed on him for the saying of the woman.” In this way God carries on his cause. He makes us the subjects of his grace, and then the mediums and the instruments. He could call fifty at once in a village. But what is commonly the case? One is called first. He soon pities the condition of others; and he goes to the minister by whom he was awakened, and informs him of the ignorance of his poor neighbours, and says, “Come over and help us.” He goes: and a number believe and turn unto the Lord. A single grain of corn will produce several ears; these ears will produce many ears more; and the increase in time will

be sufficient for the semination of a field, a province, a country—So says God of his people, “I will sow them in the earth.” Thus churches are raised. Thus kingdoms are evangelized.

Why are good men called “the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof”—“the salt of the earth”—“the light of the world”—“a dew from the Lord”—but to express the advantages others derive from them? And who can tell the extent of the benefits produced by their prayers, example, and influence? We are persuaded that none of them are useless: and he who has been the means of the salvation of one soul, has done more than the hero who has delivered a whole empire from civil bondage—for “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over *one* sinner that repenteth”—But what blessings have some individuals proved! Think of Howard in his journeys of compassion—of Thornton and Reynolds in the diffusions of their bounty—of Luther in the work of the Reformation—of Watts in his psalms and hymns—of Whitefield in his preaching—of a father and mother who bring up a family of children in the fear of the Lord—of the two or three individuals that brought Christianity to this favoured country—of the few missionaries who landed in the South Sea Islands, and induced whole communities to turn from dumb idols to serve the true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven!!

But they are made a blessing not only as they bless others, but as they are blessed by them. With regard to Joseph’s offspring, the dying patriarch “blessed them that day, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh.” What did Balaam but bless them, though he was employed to curse, when he said,

“How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!”—“The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a King is among them”—“Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.” And thus their very enemies are inwardly constrained to admire and extol those whom they pretend to despise, and in words even revile. But how cordially are they blessed by those to whom they have been useful! With what satisfaction does Job speak of this!—“When the ear heard me it blessed me”—“The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me.” “Blessed be my mistress,” says a servant: “I was ignorant as a heathen when I entered her family; but she has led me into the way everlasting.” “Blessed for ever be my precious mother,” says many a child, “whose easy and gentle endeavours brought me up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Their fellow-Christians bless them as their brethren, companions, and helpers. Ministers say, “The blessing of the Lord be upon you: we bless you in the name of the Lord.” “And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among all people: all that see them shall acknowledge them that they are the seed which the *Lord* hath blessed”—For, “Come,” will the Judge say, “Come, ye blessed of *my Father*, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

## MAY 3.—EVENING.

“To reveal his Son in me.” GAL. i. 16.

To reveal is to lay open something which, though in existence before, was yet unknown. The knowledge of the Son of God is necessary for all the use we can make of him. And we may observe a four-fold revelation of him. The text only speaks of one of these: but they are all true; and they are all profitable.

There is a revelation of the Saviour *to* us. This is found in the Scripture, which, therefore, we often call emphatically “revelation.” It discovers many things; but he is the principal subject: and we are persuaded nothing has found a place in it but has some relation to him. This revelation early began. It dawned in Paradise, and the light continued to shine more and more unto the perfect day. All the Jewish ordinances and sacrifices prefigured him. Of him, Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write: and the testimony of Jesus was the spirit of prophecy. He came personally as a preacher: and he was his own subject. He unbosomed himself to his disciples as far as they were able to bear it; and promised them a fuller manifestation. This was done when the Holy Spirit taught them all things; and brought all things to their remembrance that he had said unto them; and inspired them to communicate the information to others: that all might read and understand their knowledge in the mystery of Christ.

There is a revelation of the Saviour *in* us. This is more than the former. Many who have access to the Scriptures will perish; and all their knowledge will

only prove the savour of death unto death. There is, however, as to information, nothing in the internal revelation that is not in the external. It is not, therefore, a new revelation in itself; for the truths themselves are as old as the Creation; but it is new as to our perception and experience. If a man born blind were to receive his sight, he would not see a new sun, but it would be new to him. Even in a land of vision we may be called out of darkness into his marvellous light; because the eyes of our understanding may be opened. We heard of these things before; but now, in God's light, we see light. This illumination shews us not only their reality, but their excellency; and, with their glory, fixes, and replenishes, and sways the soul. Be not satisfied with any thing short of this. Distinguish between a Christian in name, and a Christian indeed. Do not place your religion in anything without you. Have you the witness in yourselves? Is Christ revealed in you? Have you such a sight of him, by faith, as to see that he is fairer than the children of men? as to feel him infinitely endeared? as to count all things but loss for the excellency of his knowledge? This is what he himself means when he said, "He that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, hath everlasting life."

There is a revelation of him *by* us. It is our destiny, our duty, our privilege, to make him known. This is done by our being the subjects of his agency; as the work displays the attributes of the author, and the streams proclaim the quality of the fountain. We should discover him by our resemblance, as his followers; and by our testimony, as his witnesses. We can speak upon other subjects—Why not upon this? Who has not opportunities to extol him among chil-



dren, servants, friends, neighbours? What do seeking souls want, but to see Jesus? Or doubting ones, but to be assured of his love? Have we been freely healed by him? Let us tell the diseased and dying of the Physician. Let us zealously aid every institution that aims to shew forth his praise. Pray that his glory may be revealed, and that all flesh may see the salvation of our God.

There is also a revelation of him *with* us. The world knoweth us not: it knew him not. We are now hid; and he is hid; and both are to be displayed at the same time. The day of the manifestation of the sons of God is also the revelation of Jesus Christ. And when he, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory. Them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. They suffered with him, and they shall be glorified together.

We wish to be distinguished. We want something exclusive: half the relish and value is gone, if others share with us. But *his* benevolence, *his* condescension, are such, that he cannot be satisfied unless we partake with him: "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."—But where will the ungodly and sinner appear?

## MAY 4.—MORNING.

“For even Christ pleased not himself.” ROM. xv. 3.

—NOT as if his undertaking our cause was against his will; or that he ever felt it to be a task and a grievance. He was voluntary in the engagement, and cheerful in the execution; and could say, I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!—But he never followed the indulgence of his natural inclination. He preferred the glory of God and our benefit to his own gratification. He did not consult his ease: but denied the demands of sleep when duty required exertion. He rejected, with anger, Peter’s proposal to spare himself from suffering. He did not consult ambitious feelings; but refused the people when they would have made him king. He stood not upon rank and consequence; but washed the disciples’ feet, and was among them as one that serveth. He was far more delighted with Mary’s reception of his word than with Martha’s preparation for his appetite. He was not only thirsty, but hungry, when the disciples left him at the well to go and buy meat; but when they returned, and said, Master, eat; he replied, “I have meat to eat which ye know not of—In your absence I have had something above corporeal satisfaction—I have been saving a soul from death, and hiding a multitude of sins—My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish his work.” When the collectors of the Temple-tax came to Peter, he said to him, “What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children or of strangers? Peter saith unto

him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free—The Temple is the house of my Heavenly Father, and I am his only begotten Son." But, though not bound like others, he foregoes his right, in order to avoid offence: "Notwithstanding, lest we should offend;" that is, excite pain, or dislike, or reflection, by their thinking we have not a proper regard to the Sanctuary and ordinances of God—"lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast in an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money; that take and give unto them for me and thee." This he exemplified all through life: He was, therefore, well prepared, and authorised to say, "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

—And observe the use the Apostle makes of it—Because Christ pleased not himself, therefore, "let the strong bear the infirmities of the weak, and not please themselves"—"Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification." He, indeed, limits the duty. We are not to humour our brother in a sinful course: but only in things innocent and lawful—and we are to do this, with a view to secure and promote his welfare, and not for any advantage of our own. But we are not to consult our own little conveniences, and appetites, and wishes. We are not even to follow our convictions, in every disputed matter. "Let us not, therefore, judge one another any more; but judge this rather, That no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth

anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died." Here, again, the Apostle calls in Jesus, as a motive, and an example—He denied himself so as to die for this weak brother, and will you, says he, refuse to deny yourselves in a trifling forbearance on his behalf? "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."

Herein, too, Paul enjoins no more than he practised; for he drank deep into the Saviour's spirit—"I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved." "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." And how noble does he here look! And how below his principles does a Christian act, when he thinks of himself only; his own accommodation—yea, even his own conscience! He is to regard the satisfaction of another's mind, as well as his own; and is to walk, not only righteously, but charitably. Yet some say, "*I do not think it sinful; therefore I am not obliged to abstain*"—And was Paul obliged to abstain? All things were pure to him; but he would not eat with offence. Some seem never to regard how their conduct will affect others: but the Scripture says, "Give none offence: neither to the Jews nor to the Gentiles nor to the Church of God." Asaph was checked in his improper language by remembering that, if he so spake, he should "offend against the generation of the upright." Let us, therefore, beware of throwing stumblingblocks in the way of the blind. Let us make straight paths for our feet, lest that which

is lame be turned out of the way: but let it rather be healed.

Christianity is designed to refine and soften; to take away the heart of stone, and to give us hearts of flesh, to polish off the rudeness and arrogances of our manners and tempers; and to make us blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke. Lord Chatham, in one of his Letters to his Nephew, finely says, "Politeness is benevolence in little things." Religion should make us the most polite creatures in the world; and what persons of rank do from education, we should do from principle; yielding our own desires and claims, to become all things to all men, if by any means we may gain some; and be not only sincere, but without offence, until the day of Christ.

If so, some professors of religion have much to learn. They think of nothing but their own indulgence. They know nothing of bearing with infirmity; of waiting for improvement; of watching for opportunity. They are decisive, and dictatorial, and hasty, and severe. They pride themselves only on what they call faithfulness, and which is the easiest thing in religion to them, because it falls in with their own natural temper—not to say, that frequently what they mean by fidelity is only rudeness and insolence. But while we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth, we are required to be courteous; and to pursue whatsoever things are lovely, and of good report.

And, without this, professors will not only render religion unamiable and repulsive; but will lower themselves in general estimation, and lose the influence which is derivable from reputation and esteem. Who can regard the haughty and the selfish? But for a good man some would even dare to die. An inoffen-



sive, self-denying, lovely disposition and carriage wins the heart. It is not in our power to love, but it is in our power to be loved. Our loving another depends upon him; and here we have no control: but another's loving us depends upon ourselves; and he that will have friends, must show himself friendly.

Doddridge buried a most interesting child at nine years of age. The dear little creature was a general favourite; and he tells us in his Funeral Sermon, that when he one day asked her, how it was that everybody loved her—I know not, she said, unless it be that I love everybody.—Tell your children this. Also read to them—"The child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord and also with men."

"For he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us, therefore, follow after things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."

MAY 4.—EVENING.

"And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen." LUKE xxiv. 52, 53.

THIS was the consequence of the affecting transaction recorded in the preceding verses. "He led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven"—Upon this four things are recorded of these *blessed* disciples.

First, their adoration of him—"They worshipped him." Full of astonishment, and straining their eyes

to follow him in his traceless flight, they were *standing* when he had ascended : and hence the angelic messengers said, “Why *stand* ye gazing up into heaven?” They then kneeled, and prostrated themselves upon the ground—and “worshipped him.” And what was this worship? It was nothing less than *Divine*. It was addressed to a being now absent, and whose senses therefore could not advertize him of the homage: for they not only worshipped, but worshipped *him*. The enemies of the present truth are embarrassed with the case of Stephen. They cannot deny that *he* prayed to Christ, when he said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;” and “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” But they reply, that he *saw* Christ “standing on the right hand of God:” and *therefore* addressed him; conceding that to have addressed him in this manner, had he been absent and invisible, would have been no less than idolatry. Yet not to observe that the petitions themselves were very strange ones, to offer to a creature, even if present and in sight, we find prayer addressed to him when he was undeniably invisible and absent. Paul speaks of “all who called upon the name of the Lord Jesus.” In his own prayer for the Thessalonians he mentions him, even before the Father. “Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.” And the disciples here worshipped him after “he was carried up into heaven.”

Secondly. Their obedience —“And they returned to Jerusalem.” We call this obedience, because he had expressly enjoined it. “Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on

high." "Being assembled together with them, he *commanded* them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father." It was all along foretold that the Christian dispensation was to commence from the metropolis of Judæa.

"The Lord shall send the rod of his strength out of Zion." "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." There Jesus died and rose again. There the Apostles were to open their commission; and the Holy Spirit was to be poured down to qualify them to preach the Gospel to every creature. At this time Judæa was the centre of the known world; for America was not yet discovered, and probably not inhabited. It was the most surrounded and the most accessible situation; and therefore when the Lord made the feast unto all people, he spread it upon this mountain; the table was in the middle of the room. It would be an evidence in favour of Christianity, that it was published immediately on the spot where the facts were alleged to have occurred. And it would shew the compassionate disposition of the Founder, that he would have repentance and remission of sin in his Name to be published first at Jerusalem. Hence he required their return thither. And they, instead of fleeing or concealing themselves, repaired back to a place full of danger—a place where lately they had killed their Master, and would be still more likely to hate and persecute themselves. This would be a great trial of their obedience. They were going like lambs into a lair of wolves. But they had nothing to do with events. They knew his order for their conduct; and the path of duty is the path of safety. Yea, we see,

Thirdly, their gladness; for they not only returned, but “with great joy.” This seems surprising. He is a bad relation, we say, that is not missed. How we feel the removal of a friend or a minister who has been useful to us! and not to feel, would be a criminal insensibility. What a loss then did the disciples sustain when deprived of their Lord and Saviour who had always guided, preserved, and comforted them! Accordingly, when the intimation was first given, sorrow filled their hearts. But we here see the advantage of knowledge. For he had opened their understandings, and explained to them the Scriptures: and they now saw—That though he was going to leave them as to his bodily presence, he would be with them spiritually—That his departure would result in his own exaltation and glory—That it was also expedient for themselves that he went away--That he would appear in the presence of God for them, and be their advocate with the Father—That he would be able to make all things work together for their good—That he would prepare a place for them, and come again and receive them unto himself, that where he was they might be also. And what could they want more to induce them to rejoice? But,

Fourthly, they were as grateful as they were joyful —“And were continually in the temple praising and blessing God.” That is, they constantly repaired thither at the seasons of devotion. For we read that “when” upon their return to Jerusalem “they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphæus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. These all continued



with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." But their private engagements did not keep them from the public services of the sanctuary as often as they returned. We are not to forsake the house of our God: and we are to "enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise." It is easy to see what was the cause of their excitement, and which led them to magnify the Lord, and to exalt his name together. They blessed and praised him for all their mercies, but, above all, for his unspeakable Gift—That he was delivered for their offences and raised again for their justification—That he ever lived to make intercession for them—That he had taken possession of heaven on their behalf—and that in him they were blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. Let us cherish the same disposition, and follow their example. And let our gratitude be real and practical. Let us shew forth his praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives. "God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar."

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## MAY 5.—MORNING

"If thou knewest the gift of God." JOHN iv. 10.

As if he had said to the woman—Thou mistakest me for a mere Jew, wandering and weary, and sitting thus on the well, and asking for the refreshment of water, seemingly dependent on the kindness of a stranger. But if thou wert acquainted with me—that I am the Mercy promised from the beginning; the



Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth; that I am come into the world to save sinners; and that in me all fulness dwells—what an opportunity wouldst thou find is now afforded thee—"If thou knewest the Gift of God."—

He calls himself the *gift of God*, because he came not according to the course of nature. A body was prepared him. A virgin conceives, and bears a Son; and the holy thing born of her is called, The Son of God.—We go also further. A preternatural interposition might have taken place in a way of wrath; and this is what seemed most probable in the case, and would have been the foreboding of our guilty minds. But God sent not his only begotten Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He therefore came, not according to any rule of desert. A few years ago, we heard much of the rights of man; and though the expression was abused, and brought into contempt, there is a propriety in it. Man has rights, with regard to his fellow-creatures. Children have rights, with regard to parents; and subjects, with regard to sovereigns. A man has a right to enjoy the fruit of his labour; he has a right to worship the Supreme Being according to his conscience. But what were his rights with regard to God? What right to protection has a subject that has become rebellious? What right to wages has a servant that has run away from his master? As sinners, we had forfeited all expectation from God—except a fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation. We could have no right to the bread we eat, or the air we breathe. What claim, then, had we upon God for the Son of his love? He was a gift infinitely free; and not only

free as opposed to desert, but also as opposed to desire. Was he withholden till we felt our need of him, and became suppliants at our offended Maker's feet? Ages before we were born, the plan was formed, and accomplished, and announced. And when we are desirous of obtaining the blessings of it, we find them provided; and hear a voice, saying, Come, for all things are now ready. All other good, too, is insured by him. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Yea, he has given us all things in him; and whatever a perishing sinner needs, even to life eternal, is to be derived from him.

—And if you *knew* the gift of God—surely you would say, with the Apostle, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. “You should overlook nothing in his bounty: but gratitude should bear some proportion to the favour it acknowledges. What is the sun in Nature, to this Sun of Righteousness! What is our daily bread, to this Bread of Life! Here are the exceeding riches of his grace—in his kindness towards us by Christ Jesus.

—If you knew the gift of God, surely you would avail yourselves of it. You would consider a participation of him as the one thing needful. You would receive him as he is presented in the Gospel; and as Zaccheus received him, who made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

—If you knew the gift of God, you would not yield to despondency. You would not say, by way of objection, I have no money, no worthiness. This is supposed. Who thinks of buying a gift? of deserving a gift? especially such a gift!

—If you knew the gift of God, you would make

him known. You would commend him to your children, your relations, your friends, your neighbours—You would pray, “Let the whole earth be filled with his glory”—

“His worth, if all the nations knew,  
Sure the whole earth would love him too.”

## MAY 5.—EVENING.

“Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die.”

1 COR. xv. 32.

WHEN Isaiah had foretold the invasion of Judæa by the Chaldeans; “In that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girdling with sackcloth; behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine—let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we shall die.” If we quote the Wisdom of Solomon, it is not because we consider it inspired Scripture, but as evidence to support the common prevalence of this wretched sentiment at the period it was written: “For our time is a very shadow that passeth away: and after our end, there is no returning: for it is fast sealed, so that no man cometh again. Come on, therefore, let us enjoy the good things that are present; and let us speedily use the creatures like as in youth. Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments; and let no flower of the spring pass by us. Let us crown ourselves with rosebuds before they be withered. Let none of us go without his part of our voluptuousness: let us leave tokens of our joyfulness in every place: for this is our portion, and our lot is this.” This indeed in all ages and countries has been the manual of devotion for those worship-

pers whose god is their belly, who glory in their shame, and who mind earthly things.

It admits a fact too clear to be questioned. The living know that they shall die. The very men before us confess it; yea, they acknowledge that the event is not only certain, but near—"To-morrow we die." And this was true; for death is always near in possibility; and is never far off in reality. Yet, instead of saying, As we must die shortly, and may die soon, therefore we ought to be prepared for the event, they make it a motive to encourage licentiousness—"Let us *eat and drink*, FOR to-morrow we die." What a proof have we here of the truth of the Fall! "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live." We could as soon believe that God made fiends as that he made the human race what they now are. "God made man upright, but they sought out many inventions."

But how stands the truth of the charge with regard to us? Let none imagine that they are innocent because they have never uttered the sentiment in so many words. Your temper and actions speak louder than words—And what is *their* language? Does it not say unto God, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways?" Does it not seem to avow that nothing shall disturb your carnality and carelessness? and that if life be short, you are resolved it shall not be sad?

But is the reasoning or excitement such a monstrous perversion of every thing right as it appears? Let us place it on two grounds. Are you believers in Revelation? Do you admit that there is really an eternal world, and that you are always on the brink

of it? You are *then* worse than infidels, not as to your creed—this is truth, but as to your practice, which is inconsistent and senseless beyond all power of language to express. But if you are unbelievers, if you deny a future state, and think that we are mere masses of matter, that we perish like the beasts, and nothing survives death; you are but acting consistently with your belief, and you may then well say, “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.” The present is all the happiness you know, and you would be fools not to make the most of it—Therefore we would say to you, Go on—only remarking two things. First, be sure, perfectly sure, of your premises. But you cannot demonstrate that there is no world to come, no judgment after death. The utmost you can reach is probability. If a doubt remains in a case of such tremendous import, it must be enough to break all your repose whenever it recurs, and to stamp your conduct with insanity. Probability would be sufficient to justify a man on the other side, the safe side, the side on which, if we are mistaken as to our main expectation, we must be gainers upon the whole, and present gainers; but nothing less than absolute certainty can justify *you*. When Thistlewood the traitor was ascending the drop, he said to his companions, referring to the doubtfulness of an existence after death, “We shall soon know the great secret.” And so they would. Yet what madness and wretchedness to leave it undetermined till the discovery could be of no advantage, and the truth of the condemnation was proved by the execution of the sentence, and hell was seen and suffered at once! “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine



eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

Secondly, even admitting the truth of your premises, your conduct is not rational unless intemperance and luxury were the truest and highest enjoyment of life. But it would be easy to prove that they are not. It is worthy of observation that Epicurus himself, though he contemned religion in every form, and excluded a future state, and contended that pleasure was the great end of life, yet recommended the practice of universal virtue, and thought the virtues were to be cherished not on their own account, but *for the sake of pleasure*. He was himself the most plain and temperate of men, lived sparingly, and on the plainest food, always attesting that this was best not only for health but enjoyment; and employed it as a maxim, "That he lived most pleasantly who lived most temperately." We have better authority than this; and we are sure that good men have not only a thousand enjoyments of a nature which others know nothing of; but as to those kinds of pleasure which the men of the world value (unless the pleasures of sin), the pleasures of time and sense, they have by far the pre-eminence. Godliness is profitable unto all things; it has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. Others may possess more, but we know who hath said, "The meek shall inherit the earth." "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment."

## MAY 6.—MORNING.

“Therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee.” 2 SAM. vii. 27.

WHERE did he find his inclination and power to pray? “In his heart.” The heart is every thing in religion. Man judgeth according to the outward appearance; but the Lord looketh to the heart; and requires it—My son, give me thy heart. Where he does not find this, *He* finds nothing. Where *this* speaks words are needless; he knows what is the mind of the spirit. Hannah—she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard—yet what a prayer she prayed! and how successfully! It is a blessed thing, therefore, to find it in our heart to pray—so that, while it is with many a bodily exercise only; a task which they would gladly decline; an effort forced upon them from something without, from some danger, or trouble: we may do it naturally: and therefore constantly and pleasantly, from a principle in us—like a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.

And what was the prayer he found there? It was *this*—“Let the house of thy servant David be established before thee.” David had a peculiar concern for his family; and, from his character, we may be assured, he wished it to be not only or principally glorious, but good. It is a man’s duty to seek to promote the temporal welfare of his house; for he that provideth not for his own, especially those of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. But the wish of many is not to build up their house in Israel, but in the world. They are only anxious for an increase of earthly wealth and honour. And how injurious have such risings in life proved to the comfort and the reli-

gion of the family! And how inconsiderate and inconsistent are parents, especially if they are pious ones, in longing for such perils, when they know the depravity of human nature, and the snares of prosperity! How much better is it to see, and to leave their household great in the sight of the Lord; and under the blessing of that Providence which will make all things work together for their good!

And what produced *this* prayer? "*Therefore*"—"For thou, O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house:" "*therefore* hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee." He had refused him the pleasure and honour of building the Temple which he had purposed. But he should be no loser. The will should be taken for the deed. Though he did not build God a house, God would build him a house—and except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. But all things are possible with him: and them that honour him, he will honour. What the king said to his prime minister—"You mind my affairs, and I will mind yours"—he says to each of his servants: Serve me yourselves; and be persuaded that my blessing is upon my people, and the generation of the upright shall be blessed.

—But see—the certainty of a thing does not supersede the use of the means in attaining it. Why should David pray for it, when God had pledged himself to do it? So some would argue: but it would be the arguing of folly. The Scripture, the wisdom of God, knows nothing of this perversion. No doctrine there leads to enthusiasm. There the means and the end are connected. There activity grows out of dependence; and zeal, out of confidence. There God says,

after he has promised the thing, "I will yet be inquired of by the House of Israel to do it for them." Yea, we see prayer is not only consistent with the promise, but derived from it. It is this that furnishes the matter of our petitions: it is this that gives us all our encouragements.

Therefore let us be thankful for the promises. Let us search them out. Let us place them opposite all our wants. Let us plead them, and say, Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused him to hope. And, as *then* we can ask in faith, so we may pray with confidence: for whatsoever we ask according to his will, we know he heareth us.

## MAY 6.—EVENING.

"And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth: and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." LUKE xi. 5-10.

NEVER man spake like this man. He taught as one having authority, but not as the Scribes. This applies to the manner as well as the subject of his preaching. He had nothing of official parade and unfeeling severity; but was gentle and affectionate, and came down as the rain on the mown grass. One thing cannot be overlooked—It was the easy and fami-

liar mode in which he delivered the most important doctrine. Here were no dry definitions, no logical subtleties, no abstract reasonings, no lengthened argumentations, no abstruse allusions parading the erudition of the speaker, but darkening counsel with words without knowledge to the multitude—In his ministry the poor had the gospel preached unto them; the common people heard him gladly. He commended himself to every man's conscience by a simple manifestation of the truth; and always reached the heart by appeals the most touching and tender, and by images the most natural, conclusive, and interesting. I have read treatises on repentance, but I never derived half the instruction and impression from them all, that I have found in the parable of the prodigal son. We have had lectures on humility. But when his disciples were disputing for pre-eminence in his empire, "He called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Here he is teaching them to pray—but while he informs, he excites and encourages. He argues from the less to the greater, and makes the contrast conduce to his aim as well as the comparison. A man indisposed to the thing itself, and even complaining of the application, may grant a request to importunity—How much more may we hope to succeed with God, whose goodness like his power is infinite!

But O the execution that is done in the filling up of the representation! It intimates, first, that in



prayer we may go to God in the character of "a friend." And how pleasing and inviting is it to view the Supreme Being as standing in such a relation to us, and to know that we have not only a real but a perfect, yea, a Divine friend, who is nigh unto us in all that we call upon him for! Secondly, that we may come to him at any season, even though it be "at midnight." *He* never slumbers or sleeps; never complains of surprise or interruption. We are allowed, we are commanded to pray without ceasing. David says, "Morning, and evening, and at noon will I pray and cry aloud:" and "at midnight I will rise and give thanks unto thee, because of thy righteous judgments." Never wait for a more convenient or favourable period—go to him immediately—in the midnight gloom of thy experience or condition—He can turn the shadow of death into the morning. Thirdly, that we are allowed to ask of him largely—"Send me *three* loaves." Fourthly, that we need not be ashamed to tell him our destitute and straitened condition—"I have nothing to set before him." Fifthly, that we must be earnest and persevering in our addresses. "Asking," "seeking," "knocking," are not a mere repetition, but an emphatical gradation. Importunity is not necessary to move God; but it is necessary to evince our sincerity, and to prepare us to enjoy his undeserved favours with improvement and praise. Lastly, that none who ask, and seek, and knock, shall be refused—"For *whoso* asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." We often talk of holding a man by his word; and if he be an honest man, we have nothing by which we can hold him more firmly. Here we have the assurance of Truth itself. He cannot deny himself. Let

us therefore take *Him* at his word, and relying on his engagement, *whoever* we are, *whatever* be our character and condition, draw near in full assurance of faith, and be filled with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.

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## MAY 7.—MORNING.

“The Sun of Righteousness shall arise.” MAL. iv. 2.

HE is called the Sun of Righteousness, to intimate that he is the same in the righteous world as the orb of day is in the natural. The importance of the latter is acknowledged by all; but the value of the former is infinitely greater. What are the interests of time and sense, to those of the soul and eternity!

We know there is only one sun in our system: and there is but one Mediator between God and man. Neither is there salvation in any other—I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me. The vastness of the sun is surprising: but Jesus is the Lord of all. His greatness is unsearchable. The beauty and glory of the sun are such, that, in the absence of Revelation, and when creatures were idols, we can scarcely wonder that this illustrious display of Deity should have been adored. But He is fairer than the children of men—Yea, he is altogether lovely; and all the angels of God are commanded to worship him. But consider the inestimable usefulness of this luminary! How he enlightens! warms! fructifies! adorns! blesses! What changes does he produce! How he fills the air with

songs, and the gardens with fruit and fragrance! How he clothes the woods with foliage, and the meadows with grass! How he fills the valleys with corn, and makes the little hills rejoice on every side: and crowns the year with his goodness!—And this he has always done. The sun that ripened Isaac's corn, ripens ours; and though he has shone for so many ages, he is undiminished, and is as all-sufficient as ever. What an image of Him, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever! who has always been the source of light, life, relief, and comfort! the hope, the consolation of Israel! the desire of all nations! Truly light is sweet; and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun. But he that seeth the Sun of Righteousness, and believeth on him, hath everlasting life.

The *rising* of the sun is the finest spectacle in the creation. I fear some never saw it; at least at the most interesting season of the year. What, to them, are a thousand rising suns to the sublimity and indulgence of lying late in bed!

But when and how does the Sun of Righteousness arise? His coming was announced immediately after the Fall, when God said, the seed of the woman shall bruise the Serpent's head. This was the very first beam of the early dawn of that light which was to shine more and more unto the perfect day. His approach obscurely appeared in the types and services of the Ceremonial Law. In the clearer discoveries of the prophets, the morning was beginning to spread upon the mountains. But to the Jews he was below the horizon: they longed to see his day; and kings and righteous men pressed forward to the brightness of his rising. At length, he actually arose; and when the fulness of time was come—God sent forth his Son.

A messenger from heaven proclaimed him to the shepherds, and said, I bring you glad tidings of great joy. The Saviour is born! Oh the splendour of that morning!—It brought glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men—GOD WAS MANIFEST IN THE FLESH.

—He rises in the dispensation of the Gospel. Whenever this enters a nation or a village, *He* is evidently set forth, and the savour of his knowledge diffused. It is then said to the place, and to the people, Arise, shine, for thy light has come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

—He rises in spiritual illumination. Then he is revealed in us. He is presented to the eye of the soul. He is seen in a new manner. He fixes and fills the mind; he governs the life.

—He rises in renewed manifestations. For sometimes he hides his face and we are troubled. Then we anxiously ask, O when wilt thou come unto me? Then we wait for him more than they that watch for the morning—and when we behold him again, find a brighter day.

—He rises in ordinances. What fresh and enlivening views of him have we often in meditation; in prayer; in his own Supper; in reading and hearing his word! Hence, says Cowper,

—“Sometimes a light surprises  
The Christian while he sings;  
It is the Lord, that rises  
With healing in his wings.”

But how will he arise in the irradiations of heaven—in the morning of immortality; making a day, to be sullied with no cloud, to be followed by no evening

shade! Then their sun shall no more go down; but, as the same Poet sings,

“God shall rise, and, shining o’er you,  
Turn to day the gloomy night;  
He, your God, shall be your glory,  
And your everlasting light.”

## MAY 7.—EVENING.

“I am pacified toward thee.” EZEK. xvi. 63.

THERE can be no pacifying, without previous offence and provocation. Sin rouses the displeasure of God. Therefore he says, “Oh do not that abominable thing which I hate!” He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. The wicked shall not stand in his sight. It is no trifling thing to provoke a fellow-creature. Every one is able to injure us: but some possess larger influence and power. It is spoken of as a great disadvantage in contention to be “as one that striveth with the priest:” and it is said, “the wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion.” But to fall into the hands of the living God! Man is mortal, and soon dies. And as the injury he inflicts is temporary, so it is limited. At most he can only kill the body—there is no more that *he can* do—But there is One “who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell.” Do we provoke the *Lord* to jealousy? Are we stronger than *he*? Hast thou an arm like *God*, or canst thou thunder with a voice like *his*? As sinners, therefore, we lay entirely at his mercy, and he could easily and righteously have destroyed us, “and that without remedy.” But he was not revengeful or implacable. He was not only willing to be pacified; he even



devised means for the purpose—for by grace are we saved.

This pacification is to be viewed three ways: in the cross; in the Gospel; and in the conscience. In the cross it is accomplished. Though God is good and merciful, he must maintain the honour of his law, defend his truth, and display the rectitude of his government. Hence he set forth his Son, "to be a propitiation—to declare his righteousness—that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Hence also we are told that Christ "made reconciliation for the sins of the people." His death was infinitely valuable, not only from his innocence, but his divinity; and was "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour." Thus while sin is condemned it is pardoned; and God is glorified while we are redeemed. There is now no hinderance to a sinner's return on the part of God; and "we have boldness to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus." What do people mean when they talk of making their peace with God? If such peace can be made, it was made by the blood of the cross. If our tears, and confessions, and performances, could have accomplished the work, God would surely have spared his own Son an immensity of needless suffering. If without shedding of blood there is no remission, Christ has been sacrificed for us, or we are yet in our sins.

In the Gospel it is revealed. In vain the work had been effected unless it had been made known. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets: and whatever obscurity attaches to any other subject in the Scriptures, the light of life shines on this sub-

ject with peculiar lustre. The Peacemaker himself came and preached peace: and sent forth also his servants to publish it every where, and upon the house-tops. The Gospel ministry is called the ministry of reconciliation; that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Upon this ground, says the Apostle, "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." How blind must that guide be, who does not shew unto men this way of salvation! What a physician of no value is he who does not employ this balm of Gilead in the cure of souls!—By *his* stripes we are healed.

In the conscience it is realized. In vain is it not only procured but published, if it be rejected or disregarded. It must be applied by faith. Then we receive the atonement; rely upon it; plead it; and have access to the Father with confidence. By believing we enter into rest; and being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; not only peace above, but peace within. And it is a peace which passeth all understanding. For he is pacified perfectly, and for ever. Who can describe the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin? and who is able to say, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us?" God's frown darkens the universe; but when he smiles every thing rejoices. Eternity has no dread. Death has no sting. Affliction has no curse. "In that day," therefore, says the Church, "O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me."

Nor is this experience unfriendly to holiness, and good works. Yea, it is necessary to them: and believers are witnesses of these things. The world may think their liberty is licentious: but they run in the way of his commandments when God hath enlarged their heart. The joy of the Lord, instead of weakening their motives to duty, is their strength. The comforts of the Holy Ghost, instead of being opiates, prove cordials, and give them life more abundantly. The promises cleanse them. Hope purifies them. What says the Apostle? "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" What says God in the words before us? "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done." The apprehension of wrath not only terrifies, but repels. We hate those we dread. We cannot love a Being while we view him as an enemy to our happiness.

Till I knew God as the God of peace, my heart could no more bleed than a stone. But when I saw his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, when I saw his abundant mercy, and the exceeding richness of his grace, not only in sparing me so long, but in being willing to receive me after all my offences; and especially in having, not only without my desert, but even desire, provided a Saviour in whom I have righteousness, and strength, and all spiritual blessings in heavenly places; and was enabled to realize the whole by faith—then the stone became flesh—then I cried, God be merciful to me a sinner—then I

sorrowed after a godly sort. The prodigal could view the evil of his conduct in the misery to which it had reduced him; and he had some sense of his shame when he resolved to return and say, "I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants"—But he felt it a thousand times more when his father fell upon his neck and kissed him. O how did he repent and condemn himself for having grieved such a parent! O how did he weep when they put on the best robe; and ushered him into the room of festivity—"Yes, tears of joy!"—Nay, but tears of ingenuous sorrow too!

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## MAY 8.—MORNING.

"I will look for him." Isa. viii. 17.

THIS is peculiar language. It is the language of none in *heaven*. There all have found him, and are for ever with the Lord. It is the language of none in *hell*. There they are only concerned to escape from his hand, and to elude his eye. It is not the language of any in the *world*. There they are sufficiently active and eager; but they rise early, and sit up late, and eat the bread of sorrow, to gain some temporal advantage, honour, or pleasure—but none saith, "Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?" It is not the language of all in the *church*. There are some happy souls who know the joyful sound, and walk in the light of God's countenance: in his Name they rejoice all the day, and in his righteousness they are exalted. But there are others, whose desire is to his Name, and to the remembrance of him; whose



wish is, "Oh, that I were as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shined upon my head, and the Almighty was yet with me." These—these are the persons who are saying—and they cannot do better than to say—"I will look for him."

It is here supposed that God may hide himself from his people. Indeed it is expressly asserted in the former part of the verse: "I will wait upon the Lord, who hideth himself from the house of Jacob." Sometimes he does this as to providential dispensations, suffering them to fall into trouble, and for awhile leaving them, as if he had no regard for them, and had forgotten to be gracious. But we now refer to spiritual manifestations. Sometimes they are so in the dark, that they are unable to perceive their condition, or to enjoy the comforts of the Holy Ghost. God loves them always, and they cannot serve him in vain; but they cannot always see this, as they once did. The sun is as really in his course, in a dark day, as in a bright one; but his face is hid by fogs and clouds: and, David says to his God, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." For when we are in the dark with regard to *him*, other things come forth and dismay us—and it is true, morally, as well as physically, "Thou makest darkness, and it is night, wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth."

But the subjects of divine grace cannot rest satisfied without God. We see this in Job: "Oh that I knew where I might find him! Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him." This



anxiety and restlessness to find him results from three things. LOVE—that longs to be near the object of attachment, and cannot endure separation. CONVICTION—which tells him of God's infinite importance to his case, and of his own entire dependence upon him. I am sick, says he, and he is my only physician; I am a traveller, and he is my only guide. I have nothing; he possesses all things. EXPERIENCE—he has tested that the Lord is gracious, and the relish of the enjoyment adds to the sense of want; for that which indulges the appetite, provokes it also. Hence, though the believer does not desire more *than* God, he desires more *of* him.

Well—this restlessness is a token for good. Henry says, “A Christian, like a bird, is always on the perch, or on the wing: he is always reposing in God, or in flight after him; and the latter is as good an evidence of religion as the former: for delight is not only a part of complacency and affection, but also fear, complaint, desire—fear of losing the object—complaint of our enjoying so little of it—desire of attaining and feeling more.”

Therefore be of good comfort: and if you ask, Where you are to look for him: Look for him in Christ, where he is reconciling the world to himself, in whom he is well pleased. Look for him in the promises: there you will find him, pledged in every readiness of power and compassion. Look for him in his ordinances: where two or three are gathered together, there is He in the midst of them. And not only look for him in the temple, but in the closet: pray to thy Father who *is* in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. Look for him in thy former experience. Call to remem-

brance thy song in the night. Can all your former views and feelings be a delusion? Would he have shewn you such things as these, and also have accepted an offering at your hands, if he had been minded to kill you?

And when you have found him whom you are looking for, fall at his feet, and ingenuously confess your unworthiness in causing him to withdraw from you. Do not complain of *him*; justify *him*; but condemn *yourselves*. And instead of thinking he has dealt hardly with you, wonder that he has not cast you off for ever, and be thankful that he has been found of you again. Again you have morning; again you have spring: but the rising and shining of the sun has made it. "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; to the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever." Cleave to him with purpose of heart. Resolve rather to die than again grieve his Holy Spirit. And not only watch, but pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

## MAY 8.—EVENING.

"Even he shall build the TEMPLE OF THE LORD; and he shall bear the glory." ZECH. vi. 13.

WE need not ask, of whom speaketh the prophet, when the words immediately preceding tell us that he is "the man whose name is the BRANCH," who should "grow up out of his place"—"He," says Zachariah, "shall build the temple of the Lord"—And to fix our attention to it the more, he repeats the sentiment with

a striking addition: "Even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory." Let us observe the TEMPLE; the BUILDER; and the GLORY.

The TEMPLE means the Church of God. The Scripture often holds it forth under this image. The allusion was peculiarly natural in a Jewish writer, considering the importance attached to the house of God in Jerusalem. The name is founded on three reasons.

First, consecration. A temple is the place appropriated to sacred uses. The people of God are separated from the world, and dedicated to his service—"The Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself." This is done by his eternal purpose, and by effectual calling. The former is realized and discovered in the latter, when they who were his by choice become his by surrender, each of them saying, "Lord, I am thine, save me. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And they should remember that all they have, and all they are, is now the Lord's; and that to take any thing pertaining to a temple is not only robbery but sacrilege. Let them think of this when they would use their time, their substance, or any of their talents, as their own, regardless of the will of God. Holiness becomes God's house for ever; and therefore it becomes them. Our Saviour was offended because they made his Father's house a house of merchandize, and drove out the buyers and sellers, and hallowed it for holy purposes.\* And says Paul, "If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." How vile and dreadful was it in Manasseh to take the image of Baal and place it in the temple, opposite the mercy-seat, the very throne of the God

of Israel! Beware of profane mixtures. "What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" Christians, maintain your sacredness. Keep yourselves pure from all filthiness of flesh as well as spirit. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

Secondly, residence. A mansion is a dwelling for a nobleman, a palace for a king, a temple for a God—and the Church is called the temple of the Lord, because he occupies it: "Ye are the temple of the living God;" as God hath said, "I dwell in them, and walk in them." He is every where essentially, and it would be well for us always to remember that God seeth us: but he is in his Church by a special presence: and in a way of grace, and influence, and operation. This at once secures and dignifies it: "I will be a wall of fire round about her, and the glory in the midst of her." "This," says he, "is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it." What are numbers, or fine buildings, or imposing ceremonies, to communion with the living God?

Thirdly, devotion. He is served and worshipped in them as a temple. And he receives homage and adoration nowhere else according to his own requisition; "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." His worship therefore is a reasonable service. The offerings presented to him are not gross, but spiritual sacrifices. They are prayers, and praise, and alms, and a broken heart, and a contrite spirit: and though all these are imperfect and defiled, they result from principle: they

aim at the glory of God; and being offered through the Mediator, and with his much incense, they are accepted in the Beloved, and the worshipper has the testimony that he pleases God.

“Remember me, O Lord, with the favour thou bearest unto thy people.”

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## MAY 9.—MORNING.

“EVEN HE SHALL BUILD the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory.” ZECH. vi. 13.

WE have seen the building, let us turn to the BUILDER; “Even *he* shall *build* the temple of the Lord.” In another view he is the foundation; and the only foundation laid in Zion. No image can do him justice. The sacred writers therefore are reduced to three things—They strip images of all their imperfections, and apply them to him in their complete state—They ascribe to these images properties which they do not naturally possess; thus they speak of him as “a *living* stone;” for

“Nature, to make his beauties known,  
Must mingle colours not her *own*.”

And—They join several of these images together: thus he is not only the way, but the leader in it: not only the physician, but the remedy itself: not only the master of the feast, but the provision too: not only the foundation, but the builder also.

But how is he the builder? He is the only one—“Neither is there salvation in any other.” Yet are not Christians required to build? Does not Jude say, “Building up yourselves in your most holy faith?”



But this is to remind us that we are not only subjects, but instruments in this work. *He* does not believe and repent—*We* are the believers and the penitents. But he *makes* us such : he works in us to will and to do ; and though we are the boughs that bear “the fruits of righteousness,” “in me,” says the Lord, “is thy fruit found ;” and therefore it is called “the fruit of the Spirit.” Are not Christians required to build up others ? Yes, says the Apostle, “edify one another ;” and “seek to excel to the edifying of the Church.” And of himself he says, “As a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon.” But even ministers only build instrumentally. *He* employs them, and all their success is from him. Paul and Apollos are only ministers by whom we believe, even as the Lord gives to every man. They often begin too insensible of this, and are like Melancthon, who supposed, in his fervour, he should convert all who heard him : but they must learn—and cannot learn too soon, that it is not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord. *He* builds this temple three ways.

First, He purchases all the materials. These consist of believers. Other temples are built of lifeless substances, but this of living stones : and he procures them, and with no less a price than his own blood : “He gave his life a ransom for many.”

Secondly, He prepares them. The materials for building a common temple are not found fit, but made so : and Solomon probably in allusion to his own great undertaking says, “Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field ; and afterwards build thine house.” The wood must be felled, and come under the operation of the axe, the saw, and the

plane. The stones must be dug out of the quarry, and hewn and polished: and we are commanded to “look to the rock whence we were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence we were digged”—that is, to remember our condition by nature. But he does not leave us where he finds us, or what he finds us. He renews us in the spirit of our minds, and forms us a people for himself, to shew forth his praise.

Thirdly, He unites them. He assigns them their proper places; gives them one heart and one way; and by “faith and love, which are in Christ Jesus,” they are bound more firmly together than any human ties could attach them—The union is for ever—And the Saviour addressing his Father, says, “They are one even as we are one.”

The parts of a temple are different, but they are all necessary. The door cannot say to the window, or the wall to the roof, I have no need of thee. Some parts are more near, and some more remote; some more conspicuous, and some more concealed: but they all subserve their appointment; they have all a relation to each other; and by their junction form one whole—“We are all one in Christ Jesus”—“in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth into an holy temple in the Lord.”

Art thou found, O my soul, among those to whom the application can be made—“In whom ye are also builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit”?

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## MAY 9.—EVENING.

“Even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and HE SHALL BEAR THE GLORY.” ZECH. vi. 13.

—It is supposed that a GLORY will result from the building; and to whom can this glory belong but to the builder? A man's works praise him in the gates. Some have immortalized themselves by military achievements; some, by voyages of discovery; some, by scientific improvements; some, by the composition of a book; and some, by the structure of an edifice—But what building ever redounded so much to the glory of the builder as this temple of the Lord? It would be easy to prove, or rather to exemplify this.

Observe the badness of the materials. The worse and the more unsuitable these are, the more praise is due to the workman that bends them completely to his purpose. But there never were such materials as this builder had to work upon: so that it was necessary to change, not their form only, but their very nature; and, from earthly, sensual, and devilish, to make them heavenly and divine.

Then see the excellency of the workmanship—“His work is perfect.” The more we examine an instance of human agency, the less admiration we feel. We can generally, by examination, soon perceive some superfluity or deficiency; some possibility of alteration for the better; or at least we find the whole is within our grasp, and the extent of the art can be comprehended. But when we turn to the Lord's doing, this is marvellous in our eyes, in proportion as we explore it. By every research we seem to detect fresh indications of design; we feel ourselves

always on the verge of the infinite; we exclaim, "This is the finger of God." So it is with all his works—He doth *all* things well: but he hath magnified his word above all his Name; and in the salvation of his people he excelleth in glory.

Look at the magnitude of the work. A work is sometimes estimated by the length of time employed in the execution of it. Forty and six years, said the Jews, was this temple in building: but here the structure has been going on for near six thousand years, and is far from being accomplished yet. A work is estimated by the number of workmen engaged; and the abundance of scaffolding required. Here millions of hands have been cordially employed, and countless multitudes also, who will derive no advantage from it. Scholars, merchants, kings, heroes, tyrants, have laboured for this cause, without knowing it: and the world itself, as soon as the work is finished, will be removed and burnt up. The estimate is also taken from the duration. Man's work, like himself, is perishing. Solomon's temple was burnt by the Chaldeans, and Zerubbabel's temple by the Romans; and not a fragment remained a few ages only after their erection. But, says the Saviour, "Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The defections of heretics and the apostacies of professors do not affect it: "the foundation of God standeth sure." The most remarkable structures for permanence are the pyramids of Egypt; but though it is probable they may reach the last day, they must then fall in the wreck of all things. But from the ruins of sin he has made his people an eternal excellency, the joy of many generations.

And how glorious to himself is the manner in which

he carries it forward to its completion! Difficulties insuperable to man attend every part of the work. It is opposed by all the powers of darkness. But their attempts only serve to display the Saviour's wisdom and power. Nothing is too hard for him. He is not driven from his post; he is not compelled to pause. He will accomplish the plan precisely according to the design, and to a moment of the time appointed. The angels will not pass by the partially erected edifice and say, He began to build, but was not able to finish—"The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of the house; his hands shall also finish it. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the head stone thereof with shouting—Grace, grace unto it!"

Such is the determination of God—"even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and—*he* shall bear the glory." Every thing in the economy of salvation therefore is so arranged, that he who glories must glory in the Lord. Therefore every sentiment incompatible with this, is an erroneous sentiment; and every disposition adverse to this, is an unrighteous disposition. And in the minds of his people the proud looks *are* humbled, and the lofty looks laid low; and the Lord alone *is* exalted. They now readily exclaim, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy Name give glory, for thy mercy and thy truth's sake." How much more will this be the case, when he will come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe!—when they will cast their crowns before the Throne; and it will be their business and their delight to exclaim, "To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,



and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

"O may I bear some humble part  
In that immortal song;  
Wonder and joy shall tune my heart,  
And love command my tongue."

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## MAY 10.—MORNING.

"So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God."  
DAN. vi. 23.

HIS case at first seemed very hard to flesh and blood. But here we see the end of the Lord. All was so overruled, that Daniel had no reason to repent of his conduct, or to lament the result of it. It is true, the God he served continually did not preserve him from the den of lions: but he delivered him out of it. He could have made a way for his escape; but the prevention of the trial would not have been half so impressive and useful as the issue. What a night did he pass there! What hours were they of prayer and praise! of peace and joy! What reflections did he make upon the power and goodness of his God—while the hungry lions, and they had been prepared to devour, looked on, and snuffed his flesh, but felt an invisible Restrainer, who said, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophet no harm! How would he resolve to confide in him, and confess him, and serve him in future! How would the multitude be impressed! Those who doubted would be convinced. The timid would be emboldened. Many proselytes would be made to the religion of Daniel

—while the king said, “I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for he is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.”

How much, therefore, did his steadfastness conduce to the glory of God, and the advancement of his cause! Christians never honour God more than in the fires. When they suffer like themselves; when they are witnesses for God; when they show that his service is too dear to be forsaken, and that they are willing to follow him to prison, or to death; and that the religion they more than *profess*, enables them to glory in tribulation also—then, men see that there is a reality in it—a vital—a blessed reality; and that the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.

But the result equally terminated in Daniel's own honour and welfare. When taken up, how would every eye be drawn towards him! How breathless would be their gaze! How would every tongue extol him! With what shoutings would they follow him home!—When they met him, how ready would every man be to say, There is the man who would rather enter a den of hungry lions than violate his conscience, or sin against his God! What influence would be attached to his character! what weight to his advice and counsel!—A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches. His reputation is perfected. His attainder is revoked. He is restored. He is promoted by his sovereign to a higher station.

—And who would not have done what Darius did? He who had been faithful to his God was more likely to be faithful to his king. This is, indeed, one of the ways in which godliness *naturally* conduces to a man's present advantage. It gains him confidence: and this is the lever of elevation. Constantius, the father of Constantine the Great, while as yet this prince was a heathen, wished to know the *character* of those about him. He, therefore, called together before him all the chiefs in his suite, and ordered them to offer sacrifices to his gods, on pain of being deprived of all their honours and functions. The trial was severe. Many sunk under it. They could not give up every thing that was dear and valuable. But some were inflexible. They had bought the truth, and they would not sell it for any price. Whatever they suffered, they were resolved to have a conscience void of offence. What happened? Those who basely complied, he drove from his presence; while those who nobly refused, he entrusted with the care of his person, and placed them in the most important offices—saying, On these men I can depend—I prize them more than all my treasures. And we know who hath said, Them that honour me I will honour; but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

## MAY 10.—EVENING.

“And the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt. And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him; for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you.”

Exod. xiii. 18, 19.

HERE are two circumstances not to be overlooked, because God has deemed them worthy of record.

The first is not easily understood from the present version. It is said, They went up out of Egypt *harnessed*. The word harness, when the Bible was translated, signified not the furniture of a horse, but of a soldier—or armour; and this is the first sense the term bears in the dictionary: and, to check the presumption of a warrior, it was once said, “Let not him that putteth on the *harness* boast himself like him that putteth it off.” The translators therefore meant to say, that they went out *armed*. Yet this is not at all probable. Such a jealous tyrant as Pharaoh would, by his spies, have prevented the Israelites from manufacturing, or purchasing, or hoarding up, weapons. We find in after times, when the Philistines held the Jews in subjection, they would not allow a smith to live in the country, and only permitted them to sharpen their agricultural implements at particular places. “But they had arms in the wilderness, when they fought Amalek and others.” Yes; they had carried away a few weapons concealed, and made others out of the materials they had with them; and, above all, they furnished themselves from the spoils of Pharaoh’s army thrown on shore—But they were now only going out from Egypt. The margin is, they marched “*five in a rank*”—But this would have extended the train to an immense length. Others, therefore, have rendered it, “in five squadrons.” But all the meaning seems to be—that they moved out—not armed—but in soldier-like order; as regularly organized and slowly as disciplined troops—and not like a rude rabble, or a huddled jostling multitude. It shews that they did not go out by “haste or by flight.” And this is very remarkable, considering their numbers, and the quality of the people, and how natural it was for those behind



to dread lest their task-masters should overtake them, and therefore to press forward and incommode those that were before. But there was nothing of this: they moved with such steadiness and stillness, that "against none of them did a dog move his tongue." We are also informed, that "there was not found one feeble among them." Indeed, they had enough to do to take care of themselves and their goods, without being encumbered with invalids. Yet did ever such an immense multitude leave a place before, without one individual unable to follow? It was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

The other circumstance in this march regards "the bones of Joseph, which Moses took with them." This rendered it a kind of funeral procession, and such as no other history relates. Much people of Nain followed the bier of the widow's son; but Joseph's corpse was accompanied with every man, woman, and child, of a whole nation. There is generally some time between death and interment, though in warm climates this is very short: here was an interval of near two hundred years. Other bodies may have been carried as far, but were never so long in their conveyance to the grave—for here forty years were taken up in bearing Joseph to his burial.

We read at the death of Joseph, that "they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt;" and when we consider that he was the prime minister and the saviour of his country, and the most popular man in the realm, we may be assured that this was done in a manner the most perfect and sumptuous. The descendants of his own family would be likely to have the care of this precious deposit; and they would feel a peculiar veneration for it—But it was dear to



all; and useful to all. It was a memento of the vanity of all human greatness. Joseph had risen in life to an unexampled degree of eminence. But what? where? *now* is the governor and idol of Egypt? Mummied within those few inches of board! It was also a moral, as well as a mortal, memento. Joseph was a very pious character: he had been highly exemplary in every relation and condition of life; and much of God, of providence, and of grace, was to be read in his history—What an advantage to be always reminded of such a man, in having his remains always in the midst of them! But the body would be, above all, valuable, as a pledge of their future destination. It was a present palpable sign of God's covenant with their fathers, on their behalf.

For observe how they came in possession of this treasure.

It was according to the dying wish and prophecy of Joseph: "For he had straitly charged the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you." His charge did not arise from a superstitious principle, as if it were better or safer to moulder in one place than another. Nor even from a principle of natural and relative affection—This feeling, indeed, is often strong, and the wish of persons to lie with their kindred seems to grow with the decline of life. How affectionately does Jacob express this sentiment, when dying! "I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Macpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a buryingplace.

There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah." This, however, was more than the language of Nature in the father—and so it was in the son. The Apostle tells us, "By *faith* Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones." If he did it by faith, his faith must have had a Divine warrant. This was the promise of a God that cannot lie, that he would give Canaan for a possession to the seed of Abraham.

"And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward they shall come out with great substance." And this was, at the very time, ratified by a solemn covenant. Joseph knew of this engagement, and believed it; and though the time was remote, and the difficulties in the accomplishment many, like a true son of Abraham, he staggered not at the promise of God, through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. This raised him above the treasures of Egypt; this kept him from naturalizing there amidst all his prosperity—*there* he was only a stranger and a sojourner—another nation was his people—another land was his home. And therefore, instead of being entombed in an Egyptian pyramid, he ordered his body to be taken immediately to Goshen, and kept by them till they should go as a body to possess their inheritance, and then bury him with his fathers.

And behold the fulfilment! Enslaved as they were, they are delivered. Their enemies perish. They live

by miracle for forty years in the Wilderness. The Jordan is crossed. Canaan is taken—and, says the conqueror to the people he had led to victory, “Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth; and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.” “So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.” What more? “And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph.” Here we leave his hallowed remains till the resurrection of the just; inscribing over his sepulchre—A MEMORIAL OF THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD.

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## MAY 11.—MORNING.

“The lame man which was healed held Peter and John.”

Acts iii. 11.

How perfectly natural and picturesque are the narratives of the Bible! They serve at once to vouch for the truth of their statements, and to leave their representations fixed in the memory.

The circumstance here mentioned is too simple, striking, and touching, to be overlooked. The poor man had been lame from his mother’s womb, and was placed daily at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, to ask alms of the worshippers. Silver and gold Peter

and John had none. But they gave him something far better. In the name of the Lord Jesus, said they, rise up, and walk. And immediately his feet and ankle-bones received strength. And he, leaping up—stood—and walked—and entered with them into the temple—walking—and leaping—and praising God. The people, also, seeing what was done, hastened to Solomon's porch, greatly wondering. But the man that was healed—*held Peter and John.*

Was this the effect of apprehension? Did he imagine their influence was confined to their bodily presence? and that if he let them go his lameness would return?

Or did it result from a wish to point them out to the multitude? "Are you looking after the wonderful men who have made me whole?"—"Here," says he, eager and proud to proclaim them; "Here they are—These are they."

Was it not still more the expression of his attachment? "O my deliverers and benefactors, let me attend upon you. Let me enjoy the happiness to serve you. Entreat me not to leave you, nor to return from following after you. Let me live, let me die, with you."

—So it is in our spiritual cures. It is natural to feel a regard for those who have been the means of our recovery; and to keep hold of them. But let us remember, we may hold them too closely. And we do so, if we suffer them to draw us away from the God of all grace. For, whoever are the instruments of doing us good, He is the agent; and he will have us to remember, that the excellency of the power is of him, and not of them. Hence the reproof—"For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of



Apollos ; are ye not carnal ? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man ? I have planted, Apollos watered ; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth ; but God that giveth the increase." They are something in the order of means, and a proper respect is due to them in *this* character ; but they are nothing as to efficiency : success is entirely from God ; and his glory will he not give to another. To idolize a minister is the way to have him removed from us, or rendered unprofitable to us—"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." We can never honour God so much as by dependence upon him. And them that honour him he will honour ; and they that despise him shall be lightly esteemed.

## MAY 11.—EVENING.

"I have learned by experience." GEN. XXX. 27.

THERE is no spiritual meaning in these words. They are only the language of Laban acknowledging the benefit he had derived under God—for even *he* could talk piously—from his son-in-law Jacob ; "The Lord hath blessed me for thy sake." But the way in which he says he had learned this—"I have learned by experience," will apply to a Christian in speaking of his acquaintance with divine things ; and affords us an occasion to notice a very interesting subject.

Experiments are processes of trial, to determine something not sufficiently known or admitted. Experience is the knowledge derived from the trial ; and this knowledge is very distinguishable from mere



report or opinion. A medicine is announced as a specific for some malady; but when I have taken it, and have been cured by it, I have learned the excellency and efficacy of it by experience. Much of the philosophy of former times was little better than learned affectation. The vouchers of it were not willing to own their ignorance, and place themselves upon a level with the vulgar, and so they conjectured and theorized; but their hypotheses could not abide the test. Of late years a wiser course, recommended by Bacon, has been pursued, and people have been taught to found science on fact, to reason from inductions, and to take nothing for truth without trial.

Now this is what we wish with regard to the noblest of all subjects. Why cannot religion be tried? Why cannot prophecy be compared with events? Why cannot miracles be examined by any given standard of evidence? Why cannot we take what the Scripture says of the state of human nature, and go into the world and see whether it is borne out by history and observation? Yes, says the Christian, the wickedness and deceitfulness of the heart is not a notion with me—I have learned it by experience in my unthankfulness under mercies, incorrigibleness under corrections, unprofitableness under ordinances, and failures and treachery under vows and professions. I know that there is such a Saviour as the Gospel proclaims, for I have made application to him, and I have proof of his ability, suitableness and willingness to save in my own salvation—"He that believeth hath the witness in himself." The Word says, "He that walketh uprightly walketh surely," and I have learned this by experience. I have always suffered when I have turned aside to crooked and selfish

policy; but I never had reason to repent when I have acted in simplicity and godly sincerity, and been willing to deny myself for the Lord's sake. In the same way I can attest the influence and usefulness of prayer—It has calmed my fears—it has revived me in the midst of trouble—I have learned by experience that it is good for me to draw near to God.

And verily this is the best way in which we can become acquainted with divine truth. Our knowledge of it without this will be mere speculation. We read of "a form of knowledge" as well as "a form of godliness:" and what is the value of the one more than of the other, without "the power thereof?" The knowledge of some things is injurious rather than useful without it. When persons take up the sovereignty of God from a mere doctrinal system, we commonly find them heady, and contentious, and censorious: but when they learn it from experience, and are constrained to own that by his grace they are what they are, he having begun with them, instead of their beginning with him, it makes them humble, and grateful, and candid, and tender.

It is "a good thing for the heart to be established with grace;" and this mode of learning confirms the judgment, and renders a man safe against error. He is not to be ridiculed or reasoned out of his conviction. In vain would any one tell you, if you have tasted them, that gall is not bitter, or honey sweet.

The heart also, as Solomon remarks, teacheth the lips, and we derive a great advantage from experience in dealing with others. We shall be able to speak with more confidence, and more earnestness, and more feeling; because we do not deal in untried advantages, but declare that which we have seen, and heard, and

handled of the Word of life. "Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good." It is thus we gain the tongue of the learned, and know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. It is thus we can comfort others with those comforts wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

Christians therefore should study their experience. It is one of their best books; and as to some of them it has become now no inconsiderable volume. They should remember how differently things have frequently appeared in prospect, and in review. They should observe how differently they have felt and acted in various periods and conditions of life: especially they should examine what were the workings of their hearts under those afflictive dispensations which are called trials, because intended to be moral probations.

It is natural that Christians should communicate of their experience. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. Here indeed wisdom is profitable to direct. We are not to give that which is holy to the dogs; neither should we cast our pearls before swine. In a general way, it will be proper to follow the example of David, who said; "Come unto me, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul"—They alone can understand and relish the communication. And with regard to them, we are not to speak without distinction. We are not to bring forward the deep things of God to those who cannot bear them now. Neither should we dismay the timid and doubting, by displaying before them our confidence and ecstasies. We may talk with some of the eighth of the Romans, but with

others we must quote out of the seventh. It will *often* be better to talk of divine things at large without referring to our *own* experience. And we must *always* remember that we had better never speak of our experience at all, unless it be accompanied with suitable practice: for it is always of the nature of personal evidence, and therefore will only affect the hearers in proportion as they confide in us.

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## MAY 12.—MORNING.

“And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned and rebuked them, and said, ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.”

LUKE ix. 52—56.

WHY did our Saviour send a message to “make ready for him?” It could not be from a principle of self-indulgence—he had blamed Martha for her too much serving when she entertained him. Neither was it for the purpose of show and ostentation. But it was from a motive of civility—not wishing to put them to trouble and confusion by his sudden arrival, especially as he travelled not alone, but with his disciples, and probably others; and also, as he purposed paying for the accommodation he ordered—it was to *try* their dispositions. Accordingly they were immediately discovered.

But why “would they not receive him?” There had always been an implacable aversion between them



and the Jews. It appeared on all occasions, and even hindered, as we find in the answer of the woman at the well, the common offices of civil life. But to this ordinary dislike, something peculiar was here added. They knew that our Lord was a public teacher, and had heard of his miracles; but his services had been with their enemies. They also had *their* temple and their festivals, which were held at the same time with those of the Jews: and one of these was at hand. But they saw he was bound, not to Mount Gerizim, but to Mount Zion—Therefore “they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to *Jerusalem*.”

Not far from this very place Elijah had punished Azariah’s captains and companies, sent to take him—John and James therefore ask, “Lord, wilt thou that *we* command fire to come down from heaven to consume them even as *Elias* did?” The very infirmities of good men are peculiar; they are the spots of God’s children. Here was something excusable: yea, even commendable. Such was their acquaintance with Scripture—their applying to our Lord for his permission and approbation—their faith and confidence in his power, that if *He* willed the thing, it must take place—and their attachment to him: for they could not bear to see one so dear to them insulted, in being refused the common rights of strangers. But evil blended with the good. Their zeal was not according to knowledge. The punishment was also extreme: for though the people had shewn their rudeness and prejudices, they had not offered them violence: yet they must be *destroyed*, and sent down quick into hell in their sins—and *all* of them—though some might have been far less blamable than others. The cases, too, were not



parallel. Elias had a call—the very impulse in him was supernatural, and was justified by the event: for fire from heaven would not have obeyed the dictate of private passion. He acted from a regard to the glory of God, and the welfare of Israel—But these men had no call, and were urged on by their own feelings—

He therefore rebukes them—"Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." They little suspected how much their own tempers had to do in the proposal. When the Gadarenes besought him to depart out of their coasts; and when the Nazarenes took him to the brow of the hill to cast him down; these disciples did not call for such vengeance then—No: *they* were Jews—but these offenders are *Samaritans*. How insensibly does something of our selfish and carnal feelings creep in and assume a religious pretension! None of our passions justify themselves so much as anger; we think we do well to be angry—but the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. We may offer strange fire on God's own altar; but it is not thereby sanctified. The Author of Peace and Lover of Concord requires us to "shew out of a good conversation our works with meekness of wisdom. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

How much does it become us to study our own spirits, and watch over the springs of our actions! A Jehu may say, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord," when he was only removing God's enemies to clear his own way to the throne. What do some mean by dealing faithfully, as they call it, with others, but indulging their dislike and insolence? Some professors of religion never reprove their servants and children,

but in fretfulness and illhumour; and then their temper is discharged in a kind of spiritual scolding. Who can understand his errors? "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Our Lord knew James and John better than they knew themselves; and, in further reproof, he refers to himself as their example: For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." He came indeed to seek and to save the soul principally: but he did not overlook the body. He healed the diseased. He fed the hungry. And he has taught us to be merciful to the temporal wants of our fellow-creatures. And, even in carrying on his own peculiar cause, and endeavouring to promote the religion of the Bible, he allows us not to employ force; or to impoverish, or imprison, or in any way persecute. The weapons of his warfare are not carnal, but spiritual. My kingdom, said he, is not of this world: else would my servants fight—Indeed they would. Yea, they have fought. Men—women—children have fought. They have fought with more than the courage of heroes. They have *prayed*; and *lived*; and *taught*; and *wept*; and *bled*; and *died*!

## MAY 12.—EVENING.

"Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not."

PSALM xvii. 5.

RELIGION is principally an intercourse maintained between God and us. And in the thought of it there is something very wonderful and striking. When we consider his greatness and glory, and our vanity and

vileness, we are led to exclaim, "Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?" But so it is—And as he visits us, so he allows us to visit him—and while he addresses us, we address him—He addresses us in his word, and we address him in prayer.

How much they lose who are strangers to this duty, this privilege! It is our light in darkness: our solace in affliction; our sanctification in prosperity. We cannot be wise, or happy, or even safe, without it. Let me observe David and learn to pray as he prayed. "Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not."

First, See his *COURSE*. He speaks of his "goings." Religion does not allow a man to sit still. Under the influence of it he believes, knows, feels, speaks: but all these are vain unless they result in practice—unless he is, so to speak, set a going—unless he says, with David, "I will walk in thy truth." To walk is to be active and advancing. It stands for the whole of our conduct: and upon this it is that the Scripture lays such stress, requiring us as we have received Christ Jesus the Lord so to walk in him; and to walk worthy the vocation wherewith we are called.

He speaks of his goings "in God's paths." These are threefold.—The path of his *commands*. "O let me not wander from thy commandments." "Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight." His commands are to be found in his word. Faith in Christ is one of them, and necessary to our obeying all the rest; for "this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ."—The path of his *ordinances*. Pious minds alive to the authority of God who has appointed them,

and believing the promise that they who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, and feeling their need of spiritual supplies and succour, can never neglect the means of grace. They will value retirement for reading the Scriptures, and mediation, and prayer. They will love the conversation of the godly. As they have opportunity, they will repair to the sanctuary, and join in the solemn assemblies in public devotion, and in hearing the word preached, and in surrounding the table of the Lord. Others may indeed occasionally or even frequently attend upon religious institutions, but not as spiritual worshippers who use them as mediums of communion with God, and channels of communication from him.—The path of his *dispensations*. Nothing in our condition happens by chance. All events are the movements of his providence: and where others disregard them or view them only in connexion with creatures—for God is not in all their thoughts—believers acknowledge him in their connexions, their losses, their gains, their comforts, and their trials. Thus Job said, “The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” And David says, “I will sing of mercy and of judgment; unto *thee*, O Lord, will I sing.” Such was his course. Observe,

Secondly, his CONCERN respecting this course—“Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.” It is the language of *conviction*. He knew the injury that would result from a fall or even a slip in religion—How it would dishonour God, cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of, harden the wicked, scandalize the weak, distress the strong, injure his own usefulness and peace, and bring upon himself those trials by which his wickedness should correct him, and



his backslidings reprove him. It is the language of *apprehension*. He knew his footsteps were prone to slide. How can a man be ignorant of this who reflects on the malice and power of his adversary the devil, and the allurements of the world, and the corruption of his nature; and has seen the errors and falls of others far superior to himself? It is well to be sensible of our danger; and it is only grace that can enable us to say—

“Prone to wander, Lord, I *feel* it,  
Prone to leave the God I *love*—”

It is the language of *weakness*. He knew not only his exposure, but his inability to help himself. This a Christian learns not only from faith in the testimony of the word which everywhere assures us that we are without strength in ourselves, but from experience also. He sees how little he can depend upon his persuasions however clear, and his resolutions however firm—How often have they given way, and filled him not only with grief but astonishment! Year after year has told him that he who trusts in his own heart is a fool; and that he is not wise who trusts in his own grace—It is not *thy* grace, says the Saviour, but *my* grace that is sufficient for thee. It is the language of *confidence*. He hopes in God while he renounces all self-dependence. The one is as necessary as the other. And it is as well founded. Oh that we could keep them equally balanced in the mind—That while we avoid presumption, we may also avoid despondency—That while we are humble we may also be cheerful—That while we are cautious we may also be courageous; knowing that while we cannot stand of ourselves, he is able to keep us from falling, and has said, I will



never leave thee nor forsake thee: so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my keeper, I will not fear—Hold THOU me up, and I SHALL BE SAFE.

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## MAY 13.—MORNING.

“I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

ROM. vii. 25.

THE experience of the Christian while in this world is of a mixed nature. It resembles the day spoken of by Zechariah; which was neither dark nor clear. Whatever advantages he attains at present, there is always enough to tell him that this is not his rest. Yet, under all his complaints, he has reason to take courage and be thankful. So it was with Paul. For these words are to be taken in connexion with his language in the preceding verse; where he groans, being burdened with the remains of indwelling sin; “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

—Yes; even in the midst of such an experience as this, there is a fourfold ground of thankfulness. The Christian may say—First, I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, that my corruption is my complaint. Once it was not so with me—neither is it so with many now. *They* drink in iniquity as the ox drinketh in water. It is their element; but it is not mine. They roll it as a sweet morsel under their tongue: but I have been made to know that it is an evil thing and bitter. I loathe it, and abhor myself for it, repenting in dust and ashes. The heart of stone has been taken

away, and I have a heart of flesh; a heart affected not only with the guilt but the pollution and the vileness of sin. I have nothing to boast of; every view I take of myself is humbling—but my desire is before him, and my groaning is not hid from him. And the weary and heavy-laden are invited to come to the Saviour for rest.

Secondly, I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, that though I am in the conflict, I am not conquered. Though yet alive, the enemy is dethroned. Though it rages, it does not reign. It threatens to resume its ascendancy, and has sometimes alarmed my fears—I have said, I shall one day perish; but having obtained help of God, I continue to this day; faint, yet, pursuing—and feeling no disposition to turn back.

Thirdly, I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, that deliverance is sure.

“What though my inbred lusts rebel,  
’Tis but a struggling gasp for life;  
The weapons of victorious grace  
Shall slay my sins, and end the strife.”

The victory in this case may be inferred from the reality of the conflict. It is as certain as the word of God can render it. The result is left to no precariousness, but secured in the everlasting Covenant. He who made his soul a sacrifice for sin, shall see his seed, and be glorified in them. Their help is laid on One that is mighty. His blood cleanseth from all sin. His righteousness justifies the ungodly. His grace is sufficient for the most weak and exposed—They shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of his hand. And they may anticipate the conse-

quence; and rejoicing in a hope that maketh not ashamed, say, I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day. Yea,

Finally, I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, that the deliverance is near. Were it remote, I ought to wait for it with patience. Others wait. The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience until he receive the early and the latter rain. But it will not tarry. If life be short, the conflict cannot be long. Soon the warfare must be accomplished. Soon the enemies I have seen to-day, I shall see no more for ever. My salvation is nearer than when I believed. The night is far spent. The day is at hand—

“Though painful at present,  
’Twill cease before long;  
And then, O how pleasant  
The Conqueror’s song!”

## MAY 13.—EVENING.

“Behold my hands and my feet.” LUKE xxiv. 39.

HIS sufferings and death were not only wonderful, but all-important: and “he shewed them his hands and his feet;” because these contained the effects and proofs of them. The wounds were indeed now closed, and this was as miraculous as his resurrection itself: for the parts had been so lacerated and torn by the large nails that fastened him to the cross and sustained the whole weight of his body, that many weeks would have been required to heal them naturally. But the marks remained, and fully ascertained him to

be the sufferer who died on the cross. All the disciples now present saw them; and Thomas who was absent saw them a few days after, and was no longer faithless, but believing. And these signs of his passion our Lord retained, not only after his resurrection, but also after his ascension. John, in his visions, saw an image of him, "as a lamb that had been slain;" that is, the lamb appeared with the neck gashed, and the wool stained. He ever liveth to make intercession for us, and is our advocate with the Father, by presenting his humanity and pleading the sacrifice he offered on earth: for he entered into the holy place, there to appear in the presence of God for us, not with the blood of bulls and of goats, but with his own blood, the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel. The Father beholds his hands and his feet, and is well pleased for his righteousness' sake, and says, "Ask of me now, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." The angels behold them, and though he has not saved them, they know that he has saved us, and their benevolence leads them to exclaim with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." The saints behold them, and sing "a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

Christians, to this same sight you are hastening; for yet a little while, and you will be like him, for you shall see him as he is. But you have no reason



to look for such a real and sensible sight of him here. Some indeed seem persuaded that they have actually seen him; but their mistake obviously appears from the manner of the sight. He could render himself corporeally visible; but if he did this, he would give us a *true* representation of himself. These good people have always seen him upon the cross; but he is now in his glory. If he shewed himself at this moment, we should not see his hands and feet bleeding; but his body would be a glorious body, as Saul of Tarsus saw it, and shining above the brightness of the sun. The case seems to be this. These persons, of lively apprehensions and feeling, in the depth of their anguish and terror, obtained relief from a dying Saviour by believing; which is mental sight, and took the impression of faith for a sensible reality.

But there is still a spiritual exhibition of himself, in which he says, "Behold my hands and my feet." They are to be seen, First, in the Scripture of Truth; in its types, prophecies, history, doctrine. Secondly, in the ministry of the Gospel, which is called "the preaching of the cross." Thirdly, in the teachings of the Holy Ghost, who takes of the things of Christ, and shews them to us; so that we see the Son and believe on him. And, Fourthly, in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, where, by emblems and memorials the most simple and significant before our eyes, Jesus Christ is evidently set forth crucified among us.

And what should the sight remind us of? Beholding his hands and his feet, we should think of the evil of sin, that required his suffering and death to put it away—And of the justice of God, that spared not his own Son when he became a surety for us—And the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in his kindness to-



wards us. We hear of benefactors: but how rarely do they exercise self-denial, or make personal and painful sacrifices! We talk of love; and greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. But while we were enemies Christ died for us.

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## MAY 14.—MORNING.

“I will cause you to pass under the rod.” EZEK. XX. 37.

THREE things in the Scripture go by this name. A father's scourge; a king's sceptre; and a shepherd's crook. All these will apply in the present instance; and all of them are necessary to do some justice to the subject.

—There is a paternal rod. Thus we read, He that spareth the rod, hateth his son. I will visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquities with stripes. There can be no mistake here. The idea is correction; and the rod means the instrument with which the father chastises. God is a father; and he has a rod. This rod is made of any kind of affliction—outward troubles—bodily pains—family bereavements. Even men, wicked men, reproaching and injuring us, and undeservedly too, as to *them*, may be God's scourge to make us suffer. Thus he said of the Assyrian: “O Assyrian; the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.” Our friends, our children, our dearest comforts in life, if needs be,

God can make the means of chastising us. Who comes not under this rod? "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." They are not all exercised in the same way: but "what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" And who, painful as the exercise may be, cannot acknowledge, in the review, if not in the enduring, "it is good for me that I have been afflicted"?

And as they are useful in our progress in the divine life, so they have frequently been the means of first awakening the desire, "Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?" The failure of the human arm has led to a dependence on the Divine. The desolations of earth have said to purpose, "Arise, and depart hence, for this is not your rest." What sent the Prodigal home? He began to be in want. What brought Manasseh to repentance? In his affliction he sought the Lord God of his father—

"Father, I bless thy gentle hand :  
How kind was thy chastising rod,  
That forced my conscience to a stand,  
And brought my wandering soul to God!"

—There is a regal rod. So we call a sceptre. Of the Messiah, the King on his holy hill of Zion, it is said, "He shall rule them with a rod of iron:" but this refers to his adversaries. He has another kind of rod for his subjects: "The Lord shall send the rod of his strength out of Zion." And what *was* sent out of Zion but the Gospel? The Gospel, therefore, is his rod: and this rod is his sceptre; the emblem of his authority, displaying his majesty, and maintaining his rule. Hence it is added, "Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies;" meaning, over his sub-

jects, though surrounded with foes: for they are brought under his sway, and feel and acknowledge their subjection. It therefore follows, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Though once they said, Who is the Lord? and we will not have him to reign over us; they are all brought under the rod of his strength. The Gospel has come to them, not in word only, but in power. It has awakened their consciences; it has changed their dispositions; it has made them submit to the righteousness which is of God, and to yield themselves to his service, as those who are alive from the dead. They *were* the servants of sin; but they *now* obey from the heart the form of doctrine which was delivered to them.

—There is a pastoral rod. Of this David speaks; when, addressing the Lord as his shepherd, he says, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." This refers to the crook with which the shepherd both walks as he follows, and uses as he manages the sheep. It is the symbol and instrument of his charge and office. The people of God are naturally like lost sheep going astray, wandering upon the mountains of barrenness and danger. He seeks them, and finds them out, and brings them all under his rod. And happy they who are under his care. *He* is their shepherd, and they shall not want. He will make them to lie down in green pastures. He will feed them beside the still waters. He will restore their souls, and lead them in the paths of righteousness for his Name's sake. He will gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that

are with young. And the privilege commenced in grace, will be continued and completed in glory. "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the *Lamb* which is in the midst of the throne *shall feed them*, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

## MAY 14.—EVENING.

"And the Lord shewed me four carpenters." ZECH. i. 20.

"THE heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth hath he given to the children of men." And it is given them not only to possess and enjoy, but to cultivate. Carelessness, and ignorance, and sloth, stalk over many rude and barren spots, which skill and diligence could render beautiful and productive. It is the same with the Scripture. Many passages as they are now read seem to have no meaning, and yield no information, yet they really contain much of the wisdom that is from above. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness;" but they are addressed to us as rational creatures, and we are commanded to search them. We must therefore not only read them, but remark, and examine, and compare, and apply them. And if we do this with seriousness and prayer, we shall be amply rewarded for our endeavours, and



the good ground will yield "some an hundred fold, some sixty, and some thirty."

Zechariah had seen four horns, and had said to the angel that talked with him, "What be these?" And he answered him; "These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem." Then THE LORD SHEWED HIM FOUR CARPENTERS. And upon his inquiring, "What come these to do?" he received for answer, "These are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it."

It is not perhaps possible to determine who those "four horns" were, or whether they are to be viewed as so many individuals or nations—they were evidently hostile powers. The same may be said of these "four carpenters." Some have supposed they were Zerubbabel, and Joshua, and Nehemiah, and Ezra. In each case, a definite number seems to be used for an indefinite.

But we see from it—That the friends of Zion are as numerous as her foes; That her defence is equal to her danger; and That as the state of his people requires it, the Lord will seasonably raise up means and instruments for their succour and deliverance. This is the doctrine of the text. And the assurance may be derived from four principles—The love of God—The power of God—The faithfulness of God—The conduct of God. In the first we see that he must be inclined to appear for them, as they are infinitely dear to him. In the second we see that he is able to save them. In the third, that he is engaged to do it. In the fourth, that he always has done it—Scripture, history, and experience, being witness—



“Then let the world forbear their rage,  
The Church renounce her fear;  
Israel must live through every age,  
And be the Almighty's care.”

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## MAY 15.—MORNING.

“I will bring you into the bond of the covenant.”

EZEK. XX. 37.

WHAT is this *covenant*? Some always consider it a kind of stipulation between God and us; in which he proposes to do so much, if we will do so much: thus representing the Supreme Being as a bargainer, getting as good terms as he can; while man, the other high contracting party, agrees to them. But God is said to make a covenant with the earth, and with the beasts of the field. This cannot intend a reciprocal negotiation; but the engagement of God only. It is called a covenant allusively, to signify its stability and certainty; the effect in the one instance being put for the cause in the other. For the same reason, this name is given to that gracious constitution for the salvation of sinners through the Mediator, made known in the Scripture for the obedience of faith: and is the very same with what is also called “the mercy promised to the fathers;” and “the hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.”

The *bond* of this covenant is the obligation which it lays upon God who makes it, and upon those who are saved by it. We could not, without profaneness, have talked of *binding* God: but he has been pleased, in his infinite condescension, to bind himself. His heart could have been trusted: but he knew our

frame, and our weakness; and to remove all our fearful misgiving, arising from our meanness and guilt, he has brought himself under a covenant engagement. And if it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth it. And he has confirmed his engagement by an oath—and because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself; and also by sacrifice—and the victim was no less than his only begotten Son, and whose blood, therefore, is called the blood of the everlasting covenant. Thus he is bound to be the God of his people. He is bound to save them; to pardon them; to sanctify them; to help them. Bound to make all things work together for their good. Bound to give them grace and glory, and to withhold no *good* thing from them.

It also binds them—Not to atone for their sin—this is already expiated; nor to produce a righteousness to justify them before God—this is already brought in, and on this their hope only relies—but they are bound to obey, and serve, and glorify Him who has done such great things for them. Surely evidence, consistency, gratitude, justice, require it. They feel the obligation, and acknowledge it, and wish all to know that they are not their own, but bought with a price. They feel the obligation, and it is not irksome: for though they are bound, it is with the cords of a man, and the bands of love. It is the obligation of a mother to press to her bosom her sucking child; it is the obligation of a hungry man to eat his pleasant meat—My meat is to do the will of him that sent me. It is a yoke; but it is like the yoke of marriage to the happy pair who daily bless the bonds. It is a burden; but it is like the burden of wings to

the bird, which, instead of confining him, gives him the freedom of the skies—My yoke, says the Saviour, is easy, and my burden is light.

Blessed are the people that are in such a case—Their humble confidence can authorize them in every trouble to say, “Yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation and all my desire”—and their affectionate zeal, in every temptation, will constrain them to sing,

“All that I have, and all I am,  
Shall be for ever thine :  
Whate’er my duty bids me give,  
My cheerful hands resign.  
“Yet, if I might make some reserve,  
And duty did not call,  
I love my God with zeal so great,  
That I should give him all.”

## MAY 15.—EVENING.

“And she said, O my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed, and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him.” 1 SAM. i. 26, 27.

HERE we see the meekness of wisdom, and the wisdom of meekness. Hannah does not bring the former scene to the remembrance of Eli by his improper carriage towards her—“Oh my lord, I am the woman you called a drunkard, and treated as a daughter of Belial. What do you think of her now? And what do you think of yourself, and your false and cruel censure?” Little minds always retain a sense of an injury received: but it is the glory of a man to pass

by a transgression; and we are not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good. We question the sincerity of a man who says, I forgive but I do not forget. We are sure he does not resemble the Father of mercies; who says, Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. Good men are not to be upbraided with their miscarriages and mistakes. They have long ago mourned over them; and have condemned them more than others have done—Let them be buried in oblivion for ever.

Here we behold one of those transitions which often take place in human life. We may compare it with another affecting change of a very different quality, and which also befel a pious woman. When Naomi returned with her daughter-in-law Ruth from the country of Moab, to which she had been driven by famine, and had reached her native village, the people of Bethelam came around her, saying, “Is this Naomi?” And she said, “Call me not Naomi—Call me Mara, for the Lord hath dealt very bitterly with me. I had substance—I am now poor. I had a husband—I am now a widow. I was a mother—I am now childless. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty. Why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord has testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?” But what a difference is there between Hannah’s former and present circumstances and experience! Then she was a petitioner—now she is filled with thanksgiving, and has the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Then she presented herself at the temple in the bitterness of her soul; then she sowed in tears—now she reaps in joy; then she went forth weeping, bearing precious seed—now she returns again with rejoicing, bringing her sheaf with



her. "Oh my lord, you may have forgotten the case, but *I* have not. I who am now so favoured and honoured am the very woman who was here at such a time, drunk indeed with grief: but he has made darkness light before me; he has turned the shadow of death into the morning.—Oh my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here praying unto the Lord."

Here we learn the importance of prayer. Whoever undervalues it, says Hannah, I can extol and recommend it. I have found it good to draw near to God—For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him. Time employed in prayer is not spent in vain. Prayer is the richest traffic in the world; the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. By intercourse with God we are impressed, and made to resemble him: as the face of Moses shone when he came down from the communion of Horeb. How are we refreshed by the exercise when our spirits are weary and ready to faint! How it enables us to leave our fears and cares at the footstool of Divine grace; and go away as Hannah did with our countenance no more sad, and our heart feeling the peace of God which passeth all understanding! Trouble is the dreary path which in this vale of tears all will sooner or later tread: and to enter without a guide; to go on without a comforter; to meet death at the end without support or hope—if any man be reduced to this, "I say, an untimely birth is better than he." But let us not limit the subject or suppose with some that the worth or usefulness of prayer arises wholly and merely from the influence of the performance. The labour of the husbandman in the field is beneficial to him by the exercise, and conduces to



health and strength: but he looks also for a crop; and goes forth and sees first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear. So it is with us. The very action of prayer benefits and improves us; but if there be any meaning in the Scripture, we may rely upon answers of prayer. This woman obtained her request; and the time would fail us to tell of all those recorded in the word of God who could acknowledge that he had given them the blessings which they asked of him.

Hannah observes the answer to her petition. Prayer is sometimes answered immediately, and sometimes it is delayed. It is sometimes answered in the very thing desired, and sometimes in a way of exchange—while sometimes by strange, and even terrible things in righteousness the Lord answers his people. Wisdom therefore is here necessary in discerning, and caution in judging. We should not indeed subtilize too much; nor be distressed if we cannot ascertain what *is* in answer to prayer. We have always enough to encourage us to continue in the exercise, and should impress our minds with the conviction that our seeking cannot be in vain in the Lord.

Yet as prayer is answered, it is proper and important to attend to it; and whoso is wise and will observe these things, even he shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord. It is more than trifling with the Supreme Being, it is even insulting him, to awaken his attention when we never mean to regard his benefits. Yet thousands never think more of their prayers when they have once offered them. They knock, but never stay to see whether the door of mercy is opened. They send an address, but never wait for the reply, or read it when it comes. And will God remember prayers

which we ourselves forget, or regard prayers which we ourselves despise? On the other hand, how desirable it is to know that he has not forgotten to be gracious, or turned away our prayer from him! How confirming is it to our confidence to be able to say, with Moses, "The Lord heard me at that time also!" What excitement to praise and prayer does David derive from the persuasion; "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications; because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live!"

Hannah not only observes the regard of God to her case, but acknowledges it. We should do the same. We should not hide his righteousness within our heart; but declare his faithfulness and his salvation. Many stand in need of encouragement, and under a sense of their unworthiness and guilt are ready to conclude that the Lord will not hear them. Let us be his witnesses. Let us testify from our own experience. I have tried the freeness and fulness of his grace. I never trusted in him and was confounded, never sought him and was disappointed. Let us tell it to his own people. It will not excite their envy; the humble shall hear thereof and be glad. They have prayed for us: let us call upon them to aid our praise. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his Name together. I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. Yea, like Hannah, let us tell it to Eli—Ministers personally need such communications; and they can also improve them for the good of others, both in their private intercourse and in their public services.

What a place will heaven be when we ascend to

that Shiloh! What developments shall we have to make from our history and experience! What answers of prayer! What deliverances! What blessings to acknowledge! What mutual congratulations shall we have to receive! What praises shall we have to offer!

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## MAY 16.—MORNING.

“Therefore I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord.” 1 SAM. i. 28.

To resign so dear a child for ever, this must have been an exercise of great self-denial in Hannah. But it was only an act of fidelity to religious engagement. It was the condition of her prayer: “She vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of Hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.” Distress will often gender purposes and resolutions, because we then feel our weakness and dependence; but when the danger is removed, or the blessing obtained, and the hour of performance is arrived, we resemble the lepers who when healed returned not to give glory to God. How many have howled upon their beds, and poured out a prayer, when God’s chastening hand was upon them! But their vows of sickness have been violated by renewed health, and their iniquities, like the wind, have taken them away. Even Hezekiah, affected as he was by the Divine goodness, so that he composed a writing to fix and perpetuate the sentiment, and said, “The

living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth; the Lord was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord:" yet after all this he rendered not according to the benefit done him.

So it was with Jacob. When, going from home a forlorn youth, he was indulged with the vision at Beth-el, and alluding to the Divine intimation so suited to his circumstances of distress, he "vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee." Yet when he returned, multiplied and enriched, he passed year after year, comparatively in the neighbourhood, forgetful of his engagement, till God said to him, "Arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother." Then, and not till then, "Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: and let us arise, and go up to Beth-el; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went."

We do not much recommend vowing. We would rather urge praying. But if vows are to be made, let them be made in the strength of Divine grace;



and let them not be trifled with, but fulfilled. "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay." How noble was the conduct of David upon his deliverance! "I will go into thy house with burnt-offerings: I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble." In the same manner Hannah acts when she brings her little Samuel to Shiloh, and dedicates him to the Lord—"As long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord"—

And was she a loser by this surrender? Did he cease to be hers because he was the Lord's? She would feel a new and a peculiar interest in him, in consequence of his relation to the sanctuary. There she knew the little Levite would be safe, and happy, and dignified. There he would grow up to be the light of Israel, the prophet, the ruler, the judge of his country. And she would make him a little coat, and bring it to him year by year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. And while her fingers were employed in the needlework, her spirit would hold communion with him; and she would look forward to a state in which she would possess him for ever—

Was she a loser by this resignation? Immediately her tongue was loosed, and became as the pen of a ready writer: "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord; mine horn is exalted in the Lord; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation." There is nothing meritorious in our performances; but with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Them



that honour me, says God, I will honour. When we follow our convictions, and shew that we hold nothing too dear to part with at his call, he gives us the testimony of his approbation, and fills the mind with peace and joy. When the Eunuch was baptized he went on his way rejoicing. What is the reason that some are strangers to the liberty and comfort of the Gospel? Is it not because of some known duty neglected? or some idol adored? Are the consolations of God small with thee? Is there no secret thing with thee? Throw the head of the traitor to our Lord the King over the wall; and Joab retires, and peace is restored—O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.

Was she a loser by this sacrifice? “And the Lord visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters.” For one child given, behold five added! “And Amaziah said to the man of God, But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel? And the man of God answered, The Lord is able to give thee much more than this.” “Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.”

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## MAY 16.—EVENING.

“And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.”

LUKE ix. 51.

*Whither* he was to be received up, is not mentioned. But it is easily understood, especially if we compare the words with other passages. Accordingly, the margin refers us to two places: in the first of which Luke says, “Until the day in which he was taken up;” and, in the second, Mark says, “So, then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.” The event, therefore, was his ascending to his Father and our Father; to his God and our God. There was the home where he originally dwelt. He speaks of a glory which he had with the Father before the world was. Thus he was rich; but for our sakes he became poor, and made himself of no reputation. He resided on earth for three-and-thirty years in a kind of exile: a prince, higher than the kings of the earth, in disguise; and the world knew him not. But having accomplished the work that was given him to do, he entered into his glory.

And if nothing is left to chance in our minutest affairs, surely there was nothing unarranged with regard to his leaving this world to go unto the Father. Accordingly we here read of the *time* for his being received up. And if they have chronicles above, and days, as we have—what a memorable day would that have been in which, after such an absence, and after such astonishing exploits, and completely vanquishing

all the powers of darkness, the everlasting doors were opened, for the King of glory to enter in!

On this, therefore, the Saviour fixed his eye; and this emboldened him to *set his face stedfastly to go to Jerusalem*. For what zeal, what courage, did the determination require! He knew the perilous nature of the journey. He apprehended all that awaited him when he should arrive. He knew that there he should be forsaken—and betrayed—and apprehended—and mocked—and scourged—and crucified. Yet his resolution does not fail him. Lo! I come, says he, to do thy will, O God! I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! For he looked—*beyond*—and regarded the blessed result. And this was the glorification of his human nature; the acquirement of his Mediatorial reward; the dispensation of the Holy Spirit; the government of the world; the salvation of the Church; the enjoyment of the praises of the redeemed for ever! This was the joy set before him in covenant engagement; and for this he endured the Cross, and despised the shame. For though his soul was to be made a sacrifice for sin, yet he knew that he should rise from the dead, and see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. Therefore, as the season drew near, he looked to the issue, and triumphed in the prospect. Now, says he, is the hour that the Son of man shall be—not abased, but—glorified. *Now* is the judgment of this world; *now* is the Prince of this world cast out: and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

—So, Christian, should it be with you. There is a time appointed when you also shall be removed from this vale of tears, and be for ever with the Lord.

Think of it; and set your face boldly and firmly to go, wherever duty calls. The man who has an amputation to suffer must not dwell on the operation—but must *pass* in thought beyond, to the restoration of health, and the continuance of life. This, Christian, is the way to endure, and to be more than a conqueror. It is to reckon, that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed—You may sow in tears, but you shall reap in joy. The road may be rough, but it will soon bring you home.

“Yet a season, and, you know,  
Happy entrance will be given;  
All your sorrows left below,  
And earth exchanged for heaven.”

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## MAY 17.—MORNING.

“If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.” DAN. iii. 17, 18.

CONDUCT so tried, and so triumphant in the trial, must have had some principle to produce it. He who acts without principle, is the slave of impulse, humour, accident, custom; and you can no more rely upon him than upon a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. But when a man is governed by principle, he will be consistent in his practice. He may have infirmities, but a sameness pervades his character. He may err, but he is conscientious; and his excellencies will appear even in his mistakes and

failings. Can we find a principle adequate to *this* heroism? The Apostle tells us it was faith. But faith must have something to lay hold of—and the faith of these young men seizes three things.

The first is, the *power* of God. “Our God whom we serve is *able* to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace.” They knew nothing was too hard for the *Lord*. And we believe in the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. We, indeed, are not to look for miracles: but the power of God is the same as formerly; and there are cases in which the view of it can alone inspire relief. When difficulties multiply, and means fail, and creatures say, Help is not in us—then we must lay hold of his strength, and remember that he is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think.

The second is, his *disposition*. “And he *will* deliver us out of thine hand, O king.” This they deemed probable—perhaps they had a persuasion of it, derived from the Divine impression; or deduced from the character of God, and the records of his word. They had read in the Scriptures, along with the experience of his people, the assurance, “Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee:” “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.” Here is another argument of faith—His people eye his goodness, as well as his power; and know that he *will* appear for them, and save them—in his own way, and in his own time.

The third is, a future state—“But if *not*, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy



gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." What! would they refuse, even if death was the consequence? Yes! And this shews undeniably that they did not consider death as annihilation. They would not have acted thus had they believed that there was nothing beyond the grave. Had they perished in the furnace, their martyrdom *could* not have been their duty—it would have been the sacrifice of fools—their end would have been madness.

This is the very case argued by the Apostle: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most miserable:" "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead? And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?" God does not require us to sacrifice our being and happiness for ever to his pleasure—It is *not* his pleasure—It *cannot* be his pleasure. By the law of our nature, and the authority of his word, we are even *commanded* to seek our welfare, and to seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness—and therefore, to be willing to give these up, would be disobedience and contempt. But the language was wise and noble, when they knew, that though they fell in the conflict, they should *yet* be more than conquerors; and that, if they lost a dying, they would obtain an immortal life.

It is absurd to suppose the Jews of old had no knowledge of a future state. Search the Scriptures, says the Saviour, for in them ye think ye have eternal life. Abraham, and his fellow-heirs of the same promise, said such things as declared plainly that they sought a country, even a heavenly. David said, Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and *afterward* receive

me to glory. Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, *acted* upon this belief; and *must* have acted upon it. They endured as seeing Him who is invisible. And what was Nebuchadnezzar, compared with the Almighty? What was the furnace, compared with the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the *second* death? What could they gain by complying, compared with what they would for ever lose? And what could they lose by refusing, compared with what they would for ever gain?—We reckon, said they, that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.

—And *our* faith must regard the future; or we shall be often perplexed, and vanquished. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. This believed and realized, explains all; harmonizes all; indemnifies all; glorifies all, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” Lord! I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

## MAY 17.—EVENING.

“The son of consolation.” ACTS iv. 36.

THIS is spoken of a man who was a Levite. His ancestors had retired from Judæa to the country of Cyprus. We know not for what purpose; but there

he was born. His first name was Joses. But after his conversion to Christianity he was surnamed by the Apostles Barnabas, which is, being interpreted, the son of consolation. Two reasons have been assigned for this denomination; both very consistent with each other; and both very probable in themselves.

First, because by his property—for he had substance,—he succoured and solaced the poor and miserable.

And Secondly, because by his preaching he comforted the people of God, and encouraged sinners to come to the Saviour for deliverance.

Ministers may differ considerably from each other. Some may be called Boanerges, or sons of thunder, not only as they are bold in their manner, but as the severe seems to be their element, and they deal much in the alarming. Others are Barnabases; and have the tongue of the learned given them, that they may know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. Let us not oppose the servants of Christ to each other, thereby extolling one, and running down another, because of their diversities. Let us view them all in their commission, and their suitableness to their appointments. Their stations, their natural dispositions, their gifts, their graces, are not the same: but we need them all; and they are all useful. Let one plant, and another water; let one lay the foundation, and another build thereon; let one be set for the defence of the Gospel, and another abound in the application of it: each is alike respectable; and each shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

Beware, says the Apostle, in his address to the Corinthians, that you fall not into spiritual babyism;

or walk as men. "While one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" To him let us look, and say, not formally, but sincerely, "Lord, send by whom thou wilt send." If we attempt to make the favourite a substitute in "God's stead," we shall provoke the Most High to remove him, or to withhold his blessing by him; thereby to reprove our idolatry, and to convince us that he will not give his glory to another. Happy they whose strength is in Him! They are most likely to succeed, both in hearing and in preaching, who are most imbued with the conviction; "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

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## MAY 18.—MORNING.

"Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." *MATT. xvii. 4.*

—"Not knowing," we are assured by the Holy Ghost; "not knowing what he said." For had the motion been complied with, how could our Saviour have suffered and died? And if Peter had continued there, how could he have attended to his wife and children? Besides, he was mistaken as to the nature and design of the dispensation; which was only for a confirmation of their faith, by making them witnesses of his glory, and to afford them a glimpse or taste of the heavenly blessedness—The full fruition was for another world. If ever we think of building taber-



nacles here, we shall soon hear a voice saying, "Arise, and depart hence, for this is not your rest."

But though he did not know what he said, he knew *why* he said it. Two things caused his bliss. First, the communion of saints. And here were not only John and James, but Moses and Elias. And these were not shining statues—they spake—and spake of the Saviour's decease. What a subject! What speakers! How delightful must such intercourse have been!—But the second was the presence of Jesus. And surely it cannot be a question why it is good to be where He is. With him we are safe; and nowhere else. He is the source of all delight and knowledge. He is the fountain of honour and excellency. He is the consolation of Israel. He is all and in all.

But where *is* he with his people?—we do not mean as to his essential presence—this is universal; but as to his special and gracious.—He is with them in the closet. There he manifests himself to them, as he does not in the world. There they enjoy an intimacy, a freedom, an unrestrained intercourse with him, such as other company will not allow. Could these beams and rafters, said a good man, pointing to an unceiled roof, speak, they would testify what hours of enjoyment I have had here in communion with him. Of the closet, therefore, they can say, It is good for us to be *here*.

—He is with them in his temple. Where would you look for a man but in his own house? And the sanctuary is the place where the Lord's honour dwelleth. In all places where I record my Name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. And have they not found the promise true? Have they not seen his power and glory in the sanctuary? Of



his house, therefore, they can say, It is good for us to be *here*.

—He is with them at his table. His Cross is every thing to a Christian; and here before our eyes Jesus Christ is evidently set forth crucified among us. What a sublime duty, what an exalted privilege, is the commemoration of his death! His flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed! Who has not peculiarly found him in this exercise the Tree of Life? Who has not said, I sat down under his shadow with delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste? It is good for us to be *here*.

—He is with them in the furnace. There the Three Hebrew Children found him. The flames only consumed their bands, and set them free; and they were seen walking in the midst of the fire with the Son of God! I will be with thee, says he, in trouble. And if this be fulfilled—and it must be fulfilled—they will have reason to say, however deep the distress, Lord, it is good for us to be *here*.

—He is with them in the vale of death. How much will they need him then! Then all other friends and helpers leave them. The heart and flesh will fail them—What shall we do, they have often said; what shall we do without him then? But they will not be without him. He knows their frame; and his grace is sufficient for them: and his strength shall be perfect in their weakness—Yea, though they walk through the valley of the shadow of death, he is with them; his rod and his staff they comfort them: and then they have cause to say, Lord, it is good for us to be *here*.

How much more will they be justified in saying this in heaven! There he is with them immediately.

There they will see him as he is. There, before the presence of his glory, they will possess fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore.

But none will be translated thither in person, whose hearts are not sent off first. None will have their residence in heaven hereafter, who have not their conversation in heaven here. None will be *with the Lord for ever*, but those that find it their happiness for the Lord to be *with them now*.

## MAY 18.—EVENING.

“Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” 1 COR. i. 30.

HERE are four articles. The first is wisdom—He is made of God unto us wisdom. He is the true excellency of the understanding. In knowing him, we know all that is necessary to be known. Especially we know God—No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son who was in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. He is the author of our spiritual illumination: he is the prophet of his Church, and leads us into all truth by his word and Spirit. As the sun can only be seen by his own rays, so he is only known by his own revealing. He therefore says, “I will manifest myself unto him.” The second is righteousness—He is made of God unto us righteousness. That is, he delivers us from guilt and condemnation, and makes us just before God. The Apostle tells us how it is accomplished: “he hath made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” This righteousness, derived entirely from himself, regard-

less of our worthiness or works, is called the righteousness which is of faith, because it is only apprehended, and made ours, and pleaded, by faith. The third is sanctification—He is made of God unto us sanctification. This is as much from him as righteousness, only not in the same way. He is the one to us by imputation, he is the other by communication. By the one he changes our state, by the other our nature. By the one he entitles us to eternal life, by the other he makes us meet for it. But though the blessings are distinguishable, they are not separable. He came by water, and by blood. Whom he justifies he renews. And this sanctification is more than a reformation of manners, or mere morality. A man may be moral without being sanctified, but he cannot be sanctified without being moral. When he sanctifies us he puts a new spirit within us; delivers us from the dominion and the love of every sin; and enables us not only to obey God, but to delight to do his will, and to dedicate all we have to his service and glory. The fourth is redemption—He is made of God unto us redemption. To ascertain the meaning of which, we must observe, that it is distinguished from the foregoing benefits. But if it were taken for redemption from the curse of the Law, it would coincide with his being our righteousness; and if for emancipation from the servitude of sin, it would be comprised in his being our sanctification. It is also mentioned *after* wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification. To which we may add an appeal to other passages of Scripture where the same term is used. Thus Paul says to the Ephesians, Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the *day of redemption*. And to the Romans, We groan within

ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, *the redemption of the body*. Here the import of the term must mean the resurrection to eternal life. And there is a peculiar propriety in applying the word to this conclusion of the Christian's recovery from the effects of the Fall, not only because any great deliverance, regardless of price, is called redemption in the Scripture, but also because it is the effect of the purchase of the Cross. Christ has ransomed the bodies as well as the souls of his people, and therefore God's covenant also is with their dust. Their bodies will not only be raised, but infinitely improved, and will bear not the image of the earthly but of the heavenly Adam. The sacred writers therefore, in speaking of the happiness of believers, go forward at once to the glory of the last day—not to the denying or undervaluing of an intermediate state, but because their salvation will then, and not till then, be perfectly achieved. This consummation is all his own work and honour—"To them that look for him will he appear a second time without sin unto *salvation*." "We look for the *Saviour*, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body."

And is he made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption?—Then we learn what is our condition by nature: we are destitute of all these, and can never derive them from ourselves.—Then we see the importance and value of the Lord Jesus. He is not something only, but every thing, to them that are lost. In him we are blessed with *all* spiritual blessings.—Then we need not wonder that he is the substance of revelation, and that the Scriptures everywhere should testify



of him.—Then he should be the theme, the only theme of preaching; and every minister, faithful to his commission or usefulness, like Paul, should determine not to know any thing, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.—Then we may judge of the happiness of Christians who can realize him in all these glorious blessings as their own; and infer how resigned, and glad of heart, and thankful, they should always live.—And what says the subject to those who despise or neglect him? What do they lose? What will be their doom! How intolerable! How unavoidable! And yet how righteous!

Let me therefore be wise enough to choose this good part, and seek after an interest in him. If ever I am saved, he must be all my salvation—May he be all my desire. May a union with him be not only my supreme, but immediate concern—knowing that the gracious opportunity afforded me is short and uncertain, and—that I cannot be happy too soon. He who has the Son has life; and is prepared for every dispensation.

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## MAY 19.—MORNING.

He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded." JOHN xiii. 4, 5.

THAT he designed this to be exemplary is obvious, from his own declaration after the action had been performed. "Know ye what I have done to you. Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have



washed your feet ; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord ; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

Now it is not necessary that we should resemble him in the very circumstances of the action ; but only in the spirit of it. In Popish countries, the ceremony of washing the feet of another is often performed by persons not *very* lowly in heart—sometimes by a cardinal—yea, and sometimes even by the Pope himself. But the design is to enforce the *humility of brotherly love* ; and to teach us that no service is to be deemed too mean for Christians to perform, when Providence brings it in their way, and the condition of a fellow-creature requires it. We may profess to do this in the abstract, but refuse to afford the actual assistance called for, in particular instances, because the office is too mortifying to the pride of our feelings or manners. But this is not to love without dissimulation. This is to love in word and in tongue ; but not in deed and in truth. Many have lost all credit here, by their unfeeling, distant, and disdainful conduct towards their inferiors, when they had the finest opportunities to evince their condescension, if they had any.

It would be well if all who name the name of Christ would attend to the admonition of his Apostle—"In honour preferring one another—Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate." Job was the greatest man in the East ; yet he could say, "If I did despise the cause of my manservant or of my maid-

servant, when they contended with me ; what then shall I do when God riseth up ? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him ? Did not he that made me in the womb make him ? and did not one fashion us in the womb ?” And with regard to those sufferers generally overlooked by greatness, yea, and by mediocrity too ; and those instances of humbler kindness, which splendid beneficence never thinks of ; he could make this affecting appeal : “ If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail ; or have eaten my morsel alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof : (for from my youth he was brought up with me, as with a father, and I have guided her from my mother’s womb ; ) if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering ; if his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep ; if I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate ; then let mine arm be broken from the bone.”

A great man seldom wants more help than he can purchase or procure. Though he has wasted his substance, and reduced himself so as to deserve starvation ; his utmost extremity is superfluous subsistence, compared with the suffering of a worthy character, who is neglected because originally indigent. But the industrious poor should be the objects of our attention, whose distress is brought upon them, not by vice, extravagance, and speculation, but by the providence of God ; and whose condition sinks them below observation ; so that, in the midst of their trouble, none careth for them.

Services small in their nature are greatly esteemed by those who are commonly neglected. And in those

offices you perform for them, you serve the Lord Christ. They cannot recompense you; but He will graciously say, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."

Let me then hear this blessed invitation—Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. Let the same mind be in me, which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

## MAY 19.—EVENING.

"Noah walked with God." GEN. vi. 9.

THE same thing is testified of Enoch; and will be exemplified in every partaker of Divine grace. Two questions may be asked concerning it; the one regards the nature, and the other the excellency, of this walk.

Now as to the former of these, walking with God includes the following things. It supposes that we are on terms of *concord* and *friendship*—"How can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Here we see the necessity of a mediator. By the Fall we had revolted from God, and our access to him was cut off. But Christ once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God. He made peace by the blood of his cross; and we are accepted in the Beloved. But it is not enough that God is thus reconciled to us; we must also be reconciled to God;

reconciled to his nature, to his law, to his gospel, to his government. As sinners we have no sentiments of affection, gratitude, or obedience towards God, but feel a spirit of enmity against him—How then can we walk with him, till this alienation and aversion be subdued? This change is effected by the Holy Spirit. The love of God is shed abroad in the heart, and then our desire is to his Name. What we dreaded to part with before, we then resign with ease; and what was once irksome in the performance, becomes delightful. His commands are not grievous; his yoke is easy, and his ways pleasantness and peace.

—It also implies *nearness*. If you walk with any one, he must be with you. God is not far from any one of us; he is about our path and our bed, and is acquainted with all our ways. And as God is present with us, so we are present with him—"I am continually with thee." By faith and reflection we bring ourselves consciously under his eye: feel, wherever we are, Hagar's impression. "Thou God seest me;" and upon every temptation to sin, however secret, say with Job, "Doth not he know my ways, and count all my steps!"

—It also takes in *communion*. We do not walk with God as a madman with his keeper, or a servant behind his master, or as a stranger in the distance of reserve. God is our father and our friend; and when we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another. Many a conference passes between us. Sometimes he begins. He addresses the soul, and the soul replies—"When thou saidst, Seek ye my face, my heart answered, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." At other times we begin. We have much to divulge and much to implore. And we are allowed



to deal freely and familiarly with him; yea, we are required in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, to make known our requests unto God.

—It also expresses *mutual* progress in *the same direction*. When we walk with another, we recede, and advance, together; we move towards the same place or object. When therefore we walk with God, we pursue the same end with himself. And what is this end but his own glory? This is his aim in all his works, and in all his dispensations. And the Christian has the same bias and the same movement; and whether he eats or drinks, or whatever he does, he does all to the glory of God. Hence one moral maxim serves as a short and sufficient rule to govern his conduct—He will follow wherever the Lord goes, for he cannot lead him astray: but he will not be found where the Lord refuses to accompany him, or he cannot consistently invite his presence to go with him. Let us pass from the nature to the excellency of this course.

In walking with God there is honour. It is the dignity of man, that he alone, of all creatures in this world, is capable of it: but the Christian only actually enjoys it. In consequence of this, the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour. He is raised up from the dust and the dunghill, and placed, not only among princes, but in company with God himself. How would the poor deem themselves honoured if permitted to walk at liberty with their Sovereign! But such honour have all the saints—They walk with the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords.

In walking with God there is safety. Woe unto us



if our adversaries find us away from him, for without him we can do nothing. But what confidence and courage should not his presence inspire! He is not only for me, but with me; he is at my right hand, therefore I shall not be moved. If the enemy assails me, it is in the sight of my almighty helper. Yea, if I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for he is with me. When I first fled to him breathless, from a thousand dangers at my heels, he said to me, as David to Ahimelech: "abide with me, for he that seeketh thy life seeketh my life; but with me thou shalt be in safeguard."

There is pleasure in walking with God. For with him is the fountain of life, and in his light we shall see light. If the journey would prove discouraging, our intercourse with him relieves the tediousness of the road, prevents weariness, revives our droopings, and renews our strength. With him we can dispense with things, the loss of which would otherwise destroy all our peace and comfort. When the fig-tree does not blossom, and there is no fruit in the vine, we can rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of our salvation. In all our personal and relative trials, his presence opens an asylum; and we enter where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest.

There is profit in walking with God. Where is the believer who cannot acknowledge, "It is good for me to draw nigh to God?" The mind is powerfully affected by the objects with which it is very familiar. He who is much engaged in ignoble pursuits will soon be debased: but we are elevated in the presence and contemplation of greatness and sublimity. The things of earth tend to sensualize us: but when we are with God the inroads of the world are checked; we stand

on holy ground; impure desires and vain thoughts fall off. Our attention is fixed upon the perfections and blessedness of Jehovah, and we admire, and adore, and love, and resemble him. We feel the transforming views of his character, and are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. People take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus; and our profiting appears unto all men. And as the nearer the fountain the purer the stream, and the nearer the centre the more powerful the attraction; so, the nearer we are to God the more will all our religious principles be influenced, the more we shall grow in grace, the more will our conversation be in heaven.

Let us not then sacrifice our highest welfare in disregarding this attainment. The vessels of mercy are afore prepared unto glory. We *must* be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. What would many find heaven, if they were admitted into it, but a melancholy and miserable state? Could *they* enjoy the perpetual presence of God who cannot endure even the occasional thought of him? How wise as well as merciful is the scheme of God in the Gospel! He never advances us without making us capable of the promotion! A king may elevate a slave to a superior station, but he cannot give him the suitableness and sufficiency for it. But God, when he changes our condition, changes our nature too. Before he brings us to heaven, he makes us heavenly: he draws forth our desires after it, and enables us to delight in the elements and beginnings of it—We walk with him in a way of grace, and in token of, and in preparation for, our walking with him in glory; according to the promise, “THEY SHALL WALK WITH ME IN WHITE, FOR THEY ARE WORTHY.”

## MAY 20.—MORNING.

“Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”

2 COR. ix. 15.

THIS gratitude, no doubt, must be due, infinitely due. Yet, to excite and increase our thankfulness, it is desirable to know, not only that the Son of God has been given *for* us, but *to* us; and that he is now actually our *own*. There are some who are satisfied here. They can say, This *is my* beloved, and this *is my* friend: the strength of *my* heart, and *my* portion for ever. But this is not the case with all. Some are asking, with all the anxiousness the importance of the subject requires, Is this unspeakable gift, for which eternity will be too short to praise God, *mine*? In answer to which allow me to ask,

Do you approve of the design for which he was given? He came into the world to save sinners, in a way equally *gracious* and *holy*. Do you acquiesce in a purpose which involves the destruction of *self* and *sin*?

Have you received him? In the word and means of grace he is presented to us. We read of some who have received Christ Jesus the Lord; and as many as received him were privileged to become the sons of God. Has this act been yours? When Laban saw Abraham's servant laden with presents, he said, “Come in, thou blessed of the Lord”—Did you ever give Christ such an invitation? “Zaccheus made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully”—Did you ever give him such a welcome? And are you willing to receive him wholly? For is Christ divided? Can you receive him as your prophet, and not as your king? as your priest, and not as your

example? Can you enjoy him in his sacrifice, and refuse him in his service? Can you entertain him in spiritual privileges, and cast him out in spiritual duties?

Have you given yourselves to him? I do not say, your substance only, or your time only. You may subscribe to religious institutions, and attend the means of grace—and keep back the main thing. But have you given him yourselves? The Corinthians gave their own selves unto the Lord—Can you remember such a surrender? An evening perhaps—when, like Isaac, in the field you said, “Lord, I am thine, save me.” The close of a Sabbath, perhaps—when, in your closet, you read, and wept, and kneeled—and then rose, and wept, and kneeled again, and said—“O Lord, other lords beside thee have had dominion over me—henceforth by thee only will I make mention of thy Name.”

Do you supremely prize him? To them that believe, he is precious. Paul longed to depart to be with—James? Isaiah? Moses? No—but to be with Jesus. You have some who are dear to you on earth; you have more in heaven. Perhaps you have a child; lovely here, but a cherub there. Perhaps you have a mother there, whose knees were the altar on which you laid your little hands to pray. Perhaps you have there the dear minister who turned your feet into the paths of peace—But, thinking of HIM, can you say, “Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth I desire beside thee?”—Answer these inquiries, and claim this unspeakable gift as your own for ever.

—But here is another question: What use should the possessor make of this Gift? If you are Christians,



though you were once darkness, you are now light in the Lord, and must walk as children of light. And much of your wisdom must appear in knowing what a prize you have in your hand.—Make use of him, then, in all your duties. Meditation is a duty—Let him enrich, and enliven, and sweeten it.—Prayer is a duty—Pray always in his Name.—Make use of him in all your wants. You want cleansing—use him as the fountain open for sin and uncleanness. You want safety—flee to him as your refuge. You want food—and his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed—feed on it.—Make use of him in all your afflictions. Are you bereaved? are you poor? Rely upon him, in whom you possess all things. You know that your Redeemer liveth.

—We have one question more—What can we think of those who disregard this unspeakable gift? What can we think of their ingenuousness—in contemning such infinite goodness and mercy? Of their danger?—How can they escape if they neglect so great salvation? Of their misery?—What can a wretch do without him in death? and at the judgment-day?

It is awful to think that the Saviour may become the destroyer. The greatest blessing may prove the greatest curse.

## MAY 20.—EVENING.

“There standeth one among you, whom ye know not.”

JOHN i. 26.

THIS was the language of John at Bethabara beyond Jordan, where he was baptizing. It was addressed to many of the Jews who were assembled before him, among whom were Priests and Levites from Jerusalem, sent to inquire who he was. After disclaiming that



he was any thing more than "the voice of one crying in the wilderness," he intimates the arrival of a personage on the spot, very superior to himself, and for whom he was unworthy to perform an office the most menial—"There standeth one among you, whom ye know not."

It is needless to mention who this wonderful Being was—But we see that our Lord had nothing in his outward appearance to distinguish him from others. As to his character, he was fairer than the children of men, and altogether lovely: but he was "clothed in a body like our own;" and "in all things" was "made like unto his brethren." Had we passed him upon the road, we should have taken him for a common man. No rays of glory encircled his head. No surprising beauty marked his features—"His face was marred more than any man's, and his form more than the sons of men." Least of all would he have been distinguished by a particular garb. His coat was indeed seamless, woven from the top throughout; but this was no observable thing. Wisdom is an enemy to affectation and eccentricity; and real greatness is never anxious for show, being satisfied with the consciousness of its own claims without the acknowledgements of others.

There is much excellency in the world that is unknown. In nature there is many a rich vein of ore concealed beneath a rude surface; and many a flower that blooms unseen in the woods, and sheds its fragrance "on the desert air." Learning and genius are often buried in obscurity. The same may be said of moral and religious qualities. We are not to measure or number the instances of godliness by our personal observation. God has his hidden ones. Who has

not been surprised as well as delighted in travelling to discover frequently individuals walking in the truth in situations the most unlikely and unpromising? Abraham said of Gerar, "Surely the fear of God is not in this place?" but he found it there. Elias said, "I am left alone;" but there were "seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal." "Who," says the Church, "has begotten me these?" "These, where have they been?"

From hence Christians need not wonder at the little notice frequently taken of them. They are princes, but in disguise. The day of their manifestation is coming; and then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. But now they are seen poor, and afflicted, and despised: and little do the multitude imagine that they are heirs of God; the charge of angels; the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof; the salt of the earth, and the light of the world. And herein the members are only conformable to the head. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not"—"Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not."

There are many, we have reason to fear, who are in the same condition with John's attendants. Jesus is "among" them. And he is "standing" among them—a posture of attention—and a posture of readiness to depart. But they "know" him "not." They read of him, and hear of him; but they do not "see the Son, and believe on him." They are not spiritually and savingly acquainted with him. If they were, they would put their trust in him; they would love him; they would obey him; they would count all things but loss for the excellency of his knowledge;

and be changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Now this ignorance is very deplorable ; and the reason is because of the unspeakable importance of the object. We may be ignorant of many things, and yet be safe and happy : but to be ignorant of Christ is as if the pursued manslayer of old had been ignorant of the city of refuge ; or as if a dying patient was ignorant of the only remedy that could cure him—People *perish* for lack of *this* knowledge. It is also criminal. Hence Paul says to those who are destitute of this knowledge, “I speak this to your shame.” Their ignorance could only be their shame, as it was their sin ; and it could not have been their sin unless it had been avoidable.

The knowledge therefore is attainable. Happy they who possess it, and can say, “We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ ; this is the true God, and eternal life.” But why should any despair ? The blind man could not open his own eyes : but the Saviour was passing by ; and he cried, “Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me ;” and “straightway he received sight, and followed him in the way.” You must be taught of God ; and it is the Spirit alone that can guide you into all truth. But, “if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not ; and it shall be given him.”

## MAY 21.—MORNING.

“That I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.” PHIL. ii. 16.

THIS is mentioned as an argument, to enforce the duties he had just recommended; “Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom yeshine as lights in the world: holding forth the word of life.” And surely we are to know them that labour among us; and to esteem them very highly in love for their works’ sake; and to co-operate with them and to be zealously concerned to promote their usefulness and comfort—There is a peculiar relation between the minister and the people of his charge; and as a well-conditioned flock is the credit of the shepherd; and a well-ordered family, the commendation of the master; and the moral and prosperous state of his subjects, the praise of the ruler: so a wise, holy, consistent, amiable, lively, useful church is the honour and happiness of the preacher—He lives, if they stand fast in the Lord. They are his glory and joy.

But why, for this satisfaction, does the Apostle refer to so *late* a period as the day of Christ? Had he no present rejoicing, from their excellences and exertions? He had. Yet he knew that he must *now* rejoice with trembling. He had known many who did run well, but were hindered; who began in the Spirit, but ended in the flesh. He had seen many moral blossoms perishing without fruit; and experience taught him to distinguish between the hope of the



spring and the richness of autumn. Persons for a season may rejoice in a minister's light, but in time of temptation fall away. They may hang on his lips, and then break his heart. He only that endureth to the end shall be saved. Then are we made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end—and "the day will declare it."

And till then the true character and condition of those among whom he has laboured, will not be completely ascertained and developed.

Till then, also, his hearers will not be placed beyond the reach of moral harm; or be incapable of injuring the cause they profess.

Till then, also, his aim will not be fully accomplished; which is, to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus," and "filled with all the fulness of God."

Then, also, many will acknowledge their obligations to his instrumentality, for their conversion or edification, which he knew nothing of here. And it will be safer and better for him not to know the extent and degree of his usefulness, till he is secure from the possibility of vanity and pride—Then is the period for rejoicing, when there can be no mistake, no excess, no danger, in the joy.

Oh! may he that watches for my soul, as one that must give an account, do it with joy, and not with grief!—

What a proof is here that there will be a knowledge of each other in heaven! How else could the Apostle say of converts, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming?"



## MAY 21.—EVENING.

“And from thence we came to Philippi.” Acts xvi. 12.

“I SAY unto you, that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” Nothing can more powerfully imply, or express the importance of conversion, than this declaration of the Saviour, the faithful and true witness. However lightly or contemptuously conversion may be thought of among men, celestial beings, proverbial for their wisdom and incapable of mistake, always behold it with wonder and delight. With them, the improvements of art, the discoveries of philosophy, the exploits of heroes, the revolutions of empires, are comparatively nothing to the salvation of a soul. In their view, the release of Israel from the land of Egypt and the house of bondage, and their march through the wilderness to the land of Canaan, was a sight far less glorious and impressive, than the deliverance of a sinner from the power of darkness, and his translation into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. At the first creation, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy: but they sing a new song, and with peculiar rapture, at the second, when old things pass away, and all things become morally and spiritually new.

Luke the historian was like-minded. He here speaks of his coming with Paul and Silas to Philippi. Philippi was built by Philip, the father of Alexander. From the beginning it had been noted: but within comparatively a recent period it had been rendered exceedingly remarkable, by the two great battles which the Romans fought in its plains. In the one, Julius

Cæsar vanquished Pompey. In the other, Octavius Augustus defeated Brutus and Cassius. Though every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood, and produces so much misery, it is painful to think what a power it has always had to excite and interest the attention. What traveller that has passed through Waterloo has been able to forbear speaking of the eighteenth of June! But Luke says nothing of the work of Philip, of the prowess of Cæsar, of the fortune of Augustus! But he mentions what would immortalize the place in the annals of the soul and eternity—The conversions of two individuals—Lydia and the jailor. Lydia was amiable and moral; a proselyte to the Jewish religion; and a worshipper of the true God. The jailor was a heathen; an idolator; vicious in his disposition; as rude and savage in his soul as in his office. The conversion of the one was in answer to prayer, gentle, gradual, imperceptible in the progress, but obvious in its result. The conversion of the other was sudden, extraordinary in the circumstances, and accompanied with terror and anguish. She was overcome by the smiles of mercy, and drawn by the cords of love. He, with the arrows of the Almighty sticking fast in him, and with a wounded spirit which he could not bear, was dragged to the judgment-seat, looking only for the sentence of condemnation. Her heart the Lord opened, as the sun opens a flower in spring. His heart was stormed like a citadel, where the strong man armed kept his palace and his goods in peace.

Hence we see by what various methods divine grace operates upon different persons; and learn how improper it is to lay down any one of them as a rule from which there is no exception. Let us not judge of the

reality of the religion of others by an invariable standard; or draw a conclusion against ourselves, that we are strangers to a work of grace, because we have not been led in the same way with others. The Saviour may come in the roar of the storm: but his presence and agency are no less real, in the still small voice. Samuel was called by grace as well as Manasseh: and Watts was saved by grace as well as Bunyan. "There are differences of administration, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations: but it is the same God which worketh all in all."

The surest and best way to judge is not by the manner in which the change has been accomplished, but by the effects produced and remaining. And happy they who are able, whatever that is curious or minute may perplex them, to say, one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, I now see; whereas I was once dead, I am now alive.

## MAY 22.—MORNING.

"Justified by the faith of Christ." GAL. ii. 16.

LET me remark here the blessing and the way in which it is obtained.

What is justification? It is not the making us righteous in person, but in state. The Papists confound it with sanctification; and some Protestants do the same. But justification stands opposed to *condemnation*. It is the absolving a man from a charge: the acquitting him when accused; and pronouncing him righteous. Only as *we* are really guilty—*we*

cannot be justified by disproving the offence, but by the non-imputation of it, and treating us as innocent. The manner is described by the Apostle: "we are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth as a propitiation for sin." The blessing is full and complete: for we "are justified from all things." It is permanent and irreversible: "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." It is also a present benefit. The perception of it may be wanting; but the state is real: they *have* passed from death unto life: they *are* accepted in the Beloved. And blessed, says David, is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed in his duties. Blessed in his comforts. Blessed in his trials. For him affliction has no curse. Death, no sting. Eternity, no terror.

This inestimable blessing is obtained by the faith of Christ. We are often curious, and ask for reasons when we should be satisfied with facts. It is not necessary to be able to explain precisely how faith justifies the soul. It should be enough for us to know that it is a truth clearly revealed.

And since, O my soul, none are justified that do not believe; and all that believe are justified; let me apply my heart unto wisdom. Instead of losing myself in subtle inquiries and angry disputes, let me do two things—Let me observe, first, the importance of this faith. It is, in a sober sense, as important as Christ. What, therefore, is ascribed to him meritoriously, is ascribed to faith instrumentally. He is the well; but by faith we draw water out of it. He is the refuge; but a refuge cannot screen us, unless it be entered. He is the bread of life; but food cannot



nourish us, unless it be eaten—and all this is done by faith *only*.

Let me, secondly, ask, seriously and earnestly, have I this faith of Christ? Do I believe the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son? And am I repairing to him; and trusting in him alone for salvation? How does my faith sow? Does it “sow in tears?” How does it rejoice? Does it “rejoice in Christ Jesus?” and has it “no confidence in the flesh?” How does it work? Does it “work by love?” How does it travel? How plead? Can I say, “I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of his righteousness only?”

## MAY 22.—EVENING.

“He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.” MICAH v. 4.

If it be asked, of whom speaketh the prophet this? the words immediately preceding will furnish an answer; for they announce the birth of our Saviour in Bethlehem, and call him the ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old from everlasting. Micah refers to him under the implied character of the Shepherd of his people, and expresses his work—

He shall “*feed*.” The term is not to be confined to his furnishing his flock with food; but to be taken as including the discharge of the pastoral office in all its parts: his causing them to rest—his leading them—his restoring them when they go astray—his healing them when wounded or sick—his defending and securing them. But observe the *manner* in which he is to perform his work.

He is to do it diligently and attentively—He shall



*stand* and feed. We read of shepherds who lie down, loving to slumber. And even the most dutiful and sedulous shepherd sometimes unbends; he must have his moments and hours of relaxation and repose, during which his vigilance is suspended. But Jesus is always in a posture of observance and care: his sheep graze or repose beneath his look; he withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous. He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps.

He is to do it ably and powerfully—He shall feed in the *strength* of the Lord. On earth he had power to forgive sins, and heal all manner of diseases, and call by his word whom he would, and they came unto him. He said to Zaccheus in the tree, Make haste and come down; and to Matthew at the receipt of custom, Follow me; and immediately they obeyed him. Has he less power now he is in heaven? He has power given him over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him. It is their happiness to know that they are under the charge of one who is mighty to save; able to save unto the uttermost. Their weakness requires this; their condition requires it. They are surrounded with enemies. Many of them are visible; but if our eyes were open to see the invisible, we should be convinced that we could not be for an instant safe but as we are kept by the power of God. David, reminded of his inequality to the foe he was willing to fight, said unto Saul; “Thy servant kept his father’s sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock; and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered him out of his mouth: and when he rose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.” And what said the

Saviour? "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." His people do not always apprehend this; their fears are often great because their faith is small; and they draw the conclusion that they shall one day perish. At other times they can realize it; and then they feel secure, though in the midst of danger, and can say with Paul—"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day."

He is to do it with grace and dignity—He shall feed in the *majesty* of the name of the Lord his God. It does not refer to a temporal and worldly majesty. This he did not possess. He was born in a stable and laid in a manger. He was a man of sorrows. He was crucified as a slave and malefactor. Thus he had no form nor comeliness, nor any beauty, that they should desire him. Yet even then there were those who beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. One of these could say, "We were eye-witnesses of his majesty"—He refers peculiarly to his transfiguration, when his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment became white and glistening, and Moses and Elias appeared in glory talking with him, and a voice from heaven cried, This is my beloved Son, hear ye him. Compared with this, how poor, how mean is the pomp of a king on the most splendid of his court days! *His* kingdom is not of this world.

Action is graceful when art is concealed, and ease and nature seem only to appear. Longinus admires as an example of the sublime, the sentence, "Let

there be light, and there was light:" and nothing can be more striking than the immensity of the effect joined to the simplicity of the cause. How far was Jesus from parade and effort in all his miracles! With what facility did he accomplish his mighty works—yet with what amazing gentleness and tenderness too!

Majesty is here connected with strength. Power is not always dignified in the possession or the display. Some conscious of their force are concerned for nothing else. They only think of coercion: they delight to intimidate: they would rather be feared than loved; but these are vulgar and base spirits. Paul speaks of the excellency of the power which is of God. And had not Jesus this very power? How mildly, how kindly he exerted himself! He came down like rain upon the mown grass. He broke not the bruised reed, nor quenched the smoking flax. He paused to hear the cry of a beggar by the wayside, and commanded him to be brought to him. He raised the widow's son, and presented him to his mother. Grace was poured into his lips. Oh! to have heard the tone with which he said, "Woman, thy sins are forgiven thee"—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Yes, the world might have seen that Deity was come down in the likeness of men. What *could* be before them but the image of the invisible God?

But "with God is terrible majesty." This always Jesus displayed. His day is called the day of vengeance of our God: the great and terrible day of the Lord. Who, asks Malachi, shall abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth! He detected hypocrisy. He separated between the right-

eous and the wicked. He denounced Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, because they repented not. He doomed Jerusalem to war and desolation, because she knew not the day of her visitation. And never will he fail to shew that he is not to be insulted, or even neglected with impunity. He is holy as well as patient; just as well as merciful. Nothing is represented so dreadful as the wrath of the Lamb: "For the great day of *his* wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

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## MAY 23.—MORNING.

"Be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." MATT. xxiii. 8.

RABBI signifies Master; not a domestic or civil master, having servants or subjects under him; but a master of pupils; a leader, a teacher, having disciples who admire and follow him. It was not an ancient title: we scarcely read of it before the coming of the Messiah. The Scribes and Pharisees were exceedingly fond of this name. "They love," says our Lord, "greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, rabbi." "But," adds he, "be not ye called Rabbi."

The Apostles followed this admonition. "We have no dominion," said they, "over your faith, but are helpers of your joy." They did not lord it over God's heritage, but fed them with knowledge and understanding; and were ensamples to the flock. They considered themselves as messengers, deriving all their authority from their employer; and always referred their people from themselves to him. They delivered



nothing but what they had received; and called upon those they addressed, not to believe in them implicitly, but to search the Scriptures; to prove all things; and hold fast that which was good. They were offended if persons thought too highly of them, or wished to be named after them. "Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as God gave to every man?" "So, then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."

It is now hardly possible to avoid religious names; but we lament that they were ever introduced. Why should parties be called Calvinists, Arminians, Lutherans, Baxterians, or by any other denomination? If the sentiments held by any of these men are not found in the Sacred Writings, they are not binding upon the conscience, whoever sanctions them; and if they are, why should it be intimated that they have any other origin? Let us be satisfied with the words the Holy Ghost useth, without attaching salvation or damnation to men's definitions of them. The documents are divine and infallible; but who can pronounce the explications to be so?

If we call ourselves by the name of any human authority, let it be an inspired one. Let us call ourselves Paulites, after Paul; or Johnites, after John. But no. The worthy name by which we will be called, is *Christians—after Christ*. All we are brethren—but he *is* our Master; and the voice from the most excellent glory cries, "Hear ye *him*." His authority was proved by miracles, wonders, and signs. In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All he delivers to us is truth—truth unmixed with error—truth



of the mightiest importance—truth that can make us free—truth that can make us holy—truth that can make us blessed—for evermore. And as to the mode of his tuition, none teaches like him; so tenderly; so effectually; so perseveringly.

—Will ye also go away? Lord, to whom should we go but unto thee?

—Will ye also be his disciples? O my soul! refuse not the privilege. Henceforth may I hear—him, watching daily at his gates, and waiting at the posts of his doors. Lead me in thy truth, and guide me; for thou art the God of my salvation: on Thee do I wait all the day.

## MAY 23.—EVENING.

“Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near.”

ISAIAH lvii. 19.

HERE is the proclamation of the Gospel—Peace, peace. From this lovely word the Gospel derives its name and its character: it is called “the Gospel of Peace.” Peace is sometimes used in the Scripture for well-being, or happiness at large: but here it is to be taken in its most appropriate signification, as holding forth the idea of reconciliation. Reconciliation with whom? With God through the mediation of him who loved us, and gave himself for us—“God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” We have offended and provoked him, and he could have righteously destroyed us: we have no claims upon his pity; and had we been told that he was forming a purpose concerning us, and was about to send a special messenger, yea, even his own Son into the revolted province,

what would have been the forebodings of our guilty consciences! "But God sent not his own Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him should be saved." And it is not the language of vengeance we hear from his messengers, War, war!—but "Peace, peace!" He does not wait for our repentance and submission, but of his own will he forms and accomplishes the plan. There were difficulties in the way of our restoration to his favour; these he removes: a sacrifice was necessary; this he provides—He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all. He made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. And thus having opened a new and living way into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, he arrays himself as the God of love, and comes and invites us to return. We were hid among the trees of the garden, whither fear had urged us, and the voice of thunder would have driven us farther in; but the small still voice of pardon, assuring us that with the Lord there is mercy, and with him plenteous redemption, draws us forth to his feet, and we are accepted in the Beloved.

Too well we know, from observation and experience, the evils of war. Who has not felt the wretchedness of discord? Who has not tasted the bitterness of alienation? And who has not relished the luxury of restored sentiments of kindness, tenderness, and friendship?—Let *him* judge of the joy and peace of believing! Yet what is peace with a brother, a friend, a father, a king, compared with peace with God! In his favour is life. Who can describe or imagine the calm after such a storm? It is a peace which passeth all understanding. It is angels' food—It is more. They never

felt a certain fearful looking-for of judgment, and fiery indignation. They never knew a wounded spirit and the anguish of despair, upon which descended, with healing under its wings, a hope full of immortality. But the Christian, throwing the arm of faith around the cross, can say, "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." "O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me."

But to whom is it addressed? "Peace, peace to *him that is far off, and to him that is near.*" This immediately regards the Gentiles and the Jews, as we are assured by the Apostle, who, speaking expressly of these parties, says, "He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us, and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh." The Jews were a people nigh unto him, not as to his essential presence, but his special and gracious. He resided among them; they had his oracles, his house, his ordinances, his servants. The Gentiles were far off, because they were strangers to all these privileges, and without God in the world. But Christianity knows no outward distinctions; it regards men as creatures in the same fallen condition, and brings them health and cure. "The Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him."

By a parity of reasoning, this distinction will include other classes. They who are far off, and they that are nigh, represent persons possessing certain privileges,

or destitute of them. Some are nigh—That is, they were born of godly parents; they were piously educated: from children they have known the Holy Scriptures. Others are far off—That is, they are the children of irreligious parents, who teach them to swear, but not to pray; and lead them into sin, but never go one step before them in the way everlasting.

Some are nigh—They are moral in their lives, amiable in their tempers, teachable in their disposition; they seem as free from prejudice as from vice, and only require information and decision. Of such an one, our Saviour said, “Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.” Others are far off—They are grossly wicked and abandoned, despisers of those that are good, profaners of the Sabbath, swearers, drunkards, and seem beyond the reach of reformation.

Some are nigh—They are the young, whose lives are free from care and trouble, whose understandings are not yet filled with error, whose consciences are not yet seared as with a hot iron, whose hearts are not yet hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, whose memories are retentive, and whose affections are tender and lively. Others are far off—They are the old, whose dispositions are inveterate, whose vices are deep rooted, whose habits of evil have become a second nature—“Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” “With man it is impossible; but with God all things are possible.”

We could enlarge the number of cases. There are many who have advantages which others are denied. Some are rich and others are poor—But the unsearchable riches of Christ are accessible to all. Some are learned, and others illiterate—But none can know divine things without a Divine teacher: and under his



teaching, the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein.

The proclamation of the Gospel is therefore addressed to all, without exception. And there is the greatest propriety in this: for if its language was not universal: if there were any exclusions or omissions, awakened souls, sensible of their desert would be sure to appropriate them, and conclude that *they* had no part nor lot in the matter. But they cannot question whether they are sinners; and Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. They cannot question whether they have been spending their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not; but these are invited to hear, that their souls may live. The Gospel affords a complete warrant for every man to believe on the Son of God. We are surely nigh or afar off: but the command is, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

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## MAY 24.—MORNING.

"I pray thee, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon." DEUT. iii. 25.

THIS desire seemed improper. For God had expressly said unto Moses and Aaron, "Because ye believed me not to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." We are poor creatures, and often insensibly transfer to God the effects of our own feeling and conduct. Did Moses, then, through infirmity, think that God was changeable? No: but he thought the threatening



was not absolute; especially as it was not ratified by an oath, as the exclusion of the people was. For many of God's denunciations, as we see, for instance, in the sentence with regard to Ninevah, have a condition implied, though not expressed. They will be executed *unless* repentance intervenes. Upon this principle it was possible for Moses to hope for a retraction of the interdict.

But the desire was a very natural one. It was natural for him to desire to enter Canaan, even as an object of curiosity, of which he had heard so much; but still more as an object of hope, which had been so long promised, with every enhancement. This it was that had animated the people to leave Egypt. This had encouraged them in all their travels in the desert. This was the end, the recompense of all their toils and sufferings for forty years. And they had now nearly reached it! How painful to miss the prize—when the hand was in the very act of seizing it; and to have the cup dashed—even from the lip!

Yet the desire was refused. And the Lord said unto him, Let it suffice thee—speak no more to me of this matter. For he sometimes refuses the desires of his servants, and the most eminent and endeared of them too. And he does this in two ways. Sometimes he does it in *love*. He denies, because what is desired would prove dangerous and injurious. We should think badly of a father, who, if a son asked bread, would give him a stone; or, if he asked a fish, would give a scorpion. But suppose, through ignorance, his son should ask for a scorpion instead of a fish; or suppose he should cry for a sharp instrument; or beg to climb up a ladder; would he love his child *then*,

unless he rejected his wish? In how many cases must a wise and good parent distinguish between a child's wishes and his wants! He may wish for liberty; but he wants restraint; he may wish for holidays; but he wants schooling: he may wish for dainties; but he wants medicine—Here the love of the parent must appear acting, not according to the wish, but welfare of his child. How well would it have been for the Jews had God more than once turned a deaf ear to their importunity! They would have a king—and he “gave them a king in his anger, and took him away in his wrath.” They would have flesh—and he gave them their hearts' desire, but sent leanness into their souls. On the other hand, who does not see, in looking back upon life, how well for him it was that such a scheme failed; that such a hope was crushed? How much evil lurked under the specious appearance, or would have resulted from the indulgence! Who knows what is good for a man in this life? No one but God—the *good* God—

“Good when He gives, supremely good;  
Nor less when he denies:  
E'en crosses from his sov'reign hand  
Are blessings in disguise.”

He also sometimes refuses in anger. Wrath is incompatible with love; but anger is not: anger may even flow from it. Though Christians cannot be condemned, they may be chastened: and the law of the house is, that if his children walk not in his commandments, he will visit their transgression with a rod, and their iniquities with stripes. Hence those who shall be saved eternally, may lie under the present rebukes of Providence; and be refused many things

on which they have set their heart, as to station, business, connexions, and usefulness. They may think hard of this at first; but, as they discover its unworthiness and desert, they will bow to the dispensation, and say, with David, "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." By such conduct, too, Providence reads lessons to others. See, it says, the evil of sin. See how severely God deals with it, even in his own people. And if these things are done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry! If judgment begins at the house of God, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! And if the righteous scarcely are saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear!

—Yet his desire was partially indulged: "Thou shalt not go over this Jordan; but get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes." This was obviously intended, not to tantalize him, but to be a *mitigation* of the severe sentence. The preservation of his good sight to so great an age, fitted him for the gaze; and, probably, it was also strengthened and enlarged for this very purpose. The prospect shewed him how worthy the country was of all that God had said concerning it; and would give him high and honourable views of the truth and goodness of God, in his covenant with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. Along with this, too, there was exerted the influence of divine grace, which soothed and satisfied him. For by this God can make us easy and contented under the refusal or loss of any comfort, however essential to our happiness. It appeared before: so that we behave and quiet our-

selves as a child that is weaned of his mother: our soul is even as a weaned child. While, also, his mind was raised to things above, and, in type and emblem, to a better country, into which he was immediately to enter. Then there would be no want of an earthly Canaan.

—Thus, in the midst of judgment, He remembers mercy. Though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him: for he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.

## MAY 24.—EVENING

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

2 Cor. iii. 17.

THIS is mentioned for two purposes. First, to characterize the Gospel. It is therefore called in the preceding verse “the ministration of the Spirit.” Secondly, to describe the Christian. Natural men have not the Spirit, and if they make a profession of religion, it is only the form of godliness without the power—but Christians possess the Spirit. The Apostle takes this for granted in his Epistle to the Galatians, and therefore inquires not *whether* they had received the Spirit, but *how* they had received it: “Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?”

But how is it to be ascertained whether we are made partakers of the Holy Ghost? Observe the reasoning of David; “That thy Name is near, thy wondrous works declare.” He proves the presence of God from the agency of God. We are to do the same here.



The residence of the Spirit is to be determined by the influences and operations of the Spirit. The Spirit makes those in whom he dwells "spiritual"—They "live in the Spirit"—and "walk in the Spirit"—and "worship God in the Spirit."—"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is the fruit of the Spirit;" and the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

Christians rejoice "in hope;" and there is a blessedness reserved for them in heaven called "the glorious liberty of the sons of God." But this is future; and the Apostle says, where the Spirit of the Lord is—not there *shall* be—but there *is* liberty. What liberty?

A FREEDOM FROM SIN. There is something in the very sound of slavery that offends the ear and revolts the heart. Hence when our Lord spoke of making them free, the Jews answered, "We were never in bondage to any man; and how sayest thou then ye shall be made free?" Yet their whole history shewed that they had been in vassalage to all the nearer, and to many of the remoter powers; and were even then a province of the Roman empire, paying tribute unto Cæsar. And thus men are unwilling to own that they are naturally enslaved. There is nothing they so glory in as their freedom. They despise or pity the godly as captives under the most melancholy and mortifying restraints; and therefore say, "Let us break *their* bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from *us*"—"With our lips will we prevail, our tongues are our own, who is the Lord over us?" But while they use great swelling words of vanity, they themselves also are the servants of corruption: for of whom a



“man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage.” He that committeth sin is the servant of sin; and of all wretches in the world he serves the worst tyrant, and is employed in the vilest drudgery. Sometimes, like a madman, he dances and sings in his chains. But this is not always the case. The hypocrite may boast of pleasure which he never feels: but there is no peace unto the wicked. Not only is the end of these things death, but the way of transgressors is hard. Many effects, the natural produce of his iniquity, often makes him groan inwardly. Stung with remorse and shame, he sometimes says, I will be such a slave no more—I will be free. And he resolves, but it is in his own strength. He is therefore overcome, and bound faster than before; and frequently the result of these short-lived reformatations, put off as long as possible, resorted to with reluctance, and hated in the performance, is, that the latter end is worse than the beginning. At best, he only exchanges one sin for another; and while he gives up grosser transgressions, he comes under the power of more “spiritual wickedness,” pride, self-righteousness, and unbelief. But if the Son makes him free, he is free indeed—For where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Thus the Apostle says to the Romans; “Ye were the servants of sin, but have obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine which was delivered you.” And “now being made free from sin, ye became servants unto God.” “For he that is dead is freed from sin.” He does not mean, freed from the very being of it—This would contradict the language of the Scripture at large, and make those sad whom God has commanded us to make merry. For what is the painful experience of every believer? He finds a law,

that when he would do good evil is present with him: he feels the sin that dwelleth in him: he groans, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But he is freed from the rule of it. It reigns in others, in their mortal bodies; and they obey it in the lusts thereof: but from this Christians are delivered, and against the return of it they are secured: "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

They are also freed from the love of it. Persons may avoid that which is evil, and not abhor it. While inclination urges, authority may restrain, or the fear of consequences may deter. Many wish they could indulge themselves freely and safely in their criminal passions and pursuits; and therefore hate the law that forbids and threatens them. But Christians are not held back from sin against their wills; they are mortified to it. They are dead to sin. They have seen the evil of it in the cross. Is it possible that a mother could ever love the murderer of her child? But there is no love like that which the saved sinner bears to the Saviour. Can I ever be reconciled to that which made him bleed and die? Can I ever cherish that which grieves and dishonours him who loved me and gave himself for me?

"Furnish me, Lord, with heavenly arms,  
From grace's magazine;  
And I'll proclaim eternal war  
With every darling sin."

## MAY 25.—MORNING

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

2 COR. iii. 17.

WHAT liberty?

A FREEDOM IN DUTY. There are some who dislike the word duty, though it is a word by no means unevangelical: for it entirely excludes the idea of merit; as that which is *due* cannot be meritorious. And are persons, in proportion as they are favoured, without obligations? Do not benefits gender claims to service? “Know ye not,” says the Apostle, “that ye are not your own? for ye are bought with a price; wherefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” David acknowledges this; “O Lord, truly I am thy servant: thou hast loosed my bonds:” that is, thou hast loosened me to bind me—loosened me from disease and destruction, to bind me to love and serve my deliverer and benefactor. Those who dislike the word duty, it is to be feared, dislike the thing itself; and resemble Ephraim, who loved to tread out the corn, yet not to break the clods. But “the spiritual” can say, “His commandments are not grievous.” They consider religious duties as privileges, and feel them such when the Lord is with them; for “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” To this David refers when he says, “Then shall I run in the way of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart.”

The heart is enlarged for obedience when it is exempted from the influence of carnal considerations. When Paul received his trying commission, immediately says he, I conferred not with flesh and blood. Flesh and blood are sad counsellors in the work of God; and it is easy to imagine what advice they

would have given him. Some persons are not at liberty to pursue the way that they should choose. They feel restraints arising from their reputation, or connexions, or worldly advantage. They could easily decide whether the thing was true or right in itself; and this should be the only question; but before they act, they must know what people will think and say of them—Whether they shall not be charged with hypocrisy? or enthusiasm?—whether they shall not provoke an enemy? or lose a friend? or suffer in trade? Thus they are checked by the fear of man, which bringeth a snare. What snare? The danger of drawing back, or turning aside, instead of going forward and abounding in the work of the Lord; the danger of concealing or denying their principles and conforming to the place and company they are in, instead of confessing the Saviour before men, and declaring themselves on the Lord's side. Now the grace of God delivers us from these preventions: it sets us free to follow the calls of duty; it induces us only to ask, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And what a blessed liberty does a man then feel! Thus the bird that rises high and flies along, is free from obstruction; and can move straight and quick: while the bird that keeps near the ground must make many a zigzag in his course, to avoid trees, and houses, and towers, and hills. A timid animal starts or creeps aside continually; but "the lion" keeps on in his march, "and turneth not away for any." And "the path of life is above the wise." And "the righteous is bold as a lion." Conviction is a great source of courage, but affection is a greater. There is no fear in love. Perfect love casteth out fear. Love is strong as death: many waters cannot quench love,



neither can the floods drown it. What then will be the effect of the love of God shed abroad in the heart? "We cannot," said Peter and John, "but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Bunyan very wisely makes Mr. Greatheart the conductor of the pilgrims. How would they have been let and injured without him! But where he was, there was liberty.

The Christian is also enlarged for obedience by deliverance from formality. We may well talk of the dulness and deadness of formality. The effect of it in duty is to make our souls like Pharaoh's chariots with the wheels off: we drag on heavily. But holy fervour makes us "like the chariots of Amminadab." Sails are useful, but what are they if there be no breeze? Nothing contracts and obstructs like the want of spirituality in religion. We sometimes complain of darkness; and darkness confines; but the rising sun releases the prisoners of night, and they go forth to their work and to their labour till the evening. We feel coldness; and coldness confines. The frost binds up the stream; but the melting causes it to flow. The winter holds back the powers of nature, and keeps barren the fields and the garden; but the warmth of spring sets free the principles of vegetation, and all is life and fertility. Such a difference is there in our devotional exercises, whether retired or public; between our frames, when we are left to ourselves, and when the Spirit helps our infirmities: and the preparation of the heart, and the answer of the tongue, are from the Lord.

We may add, that nothing more prepares for and aids us in the work of obedience than a discharge from the dread of condemnation. "The blood of Christ



purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God." By dead works the Apostle means sins, which produce spiritual and deserve eternal death. The purging of the conscience from these does not here refer to sanctification, but to the effect of justification, in freeing us from a sense of guilt, and giving us peace and joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement. And this grace wherein we stand is not only the most delightful privilege, but, according to the Apostle, it is necessary to our serving God. For how can we pursue our work to advantage while we are pressed down with a burden too heavy for us to bear? How must we be labouring in the fire, and wearying ourselves for very vanity, while we are thinking of atoning for our lives, or going about to establish our own righteousness! Believers have nothing to do here—Their sins are expiated; the righteousness in which they appear before God is provided. They therefore cease from their legal and tormenting drudgery, and enter into rest, and are made free indeed—and free to attend entirely to their grateful and pleasant work of pleasing and serving God in the Gospel of his Son—There is nothing servile in their obedience, and therefore it is not partial and constrained; but full, and of a ready mind—They are upholden by his "free Spirit." They are sons that serve him: for they have not received the spirit of bondage to fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father. Not that they indulge in a careless presumptuous manner in dealing with God; but they feel their relation to him, and knowing that God is not only pacified towards them, but that they are accepted in the Beloved, and are now not only reconciled but infinitely

dear to him, they have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Jesus; and can draw near in full assurance of faith. They feel their unworthiness, but they know they are welcome—welcome to approach his gates—welcome to enter his house—welcome to sit down at his table—welcome to hang upon his arm—welcome to lean on his bosom—welcome at all times and in all circumstances to spread their wants and cares before him with a certainty of relief—For where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty!

While we believe the importance of the possession, and know that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his; let us rejoice that our heavenly Father will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him; and that he giveth more grace. Let us therefore be enlarged in our desires; and not only have the Spirit, but be filled with the Spirit.

## MAY 25.—EVENING.

“Grieve not the holy Spirit of God.” EPHES. iv. 30.

THE expression is not to be taken properly and literally, as if the holy Spirit of God was capable of vexation or sorrow. The Divine Nature is not subject to human passions. God’s condescension is not to rob him of his glory. When the Scripture ascribes to him actions or affections that imply imperfection, it is in accommodation to our weakness of apprehension. We lisp with infants. And, unable to view the shining sun with the naked eye, we survey it in a vessel of water, or through obscured glass.

We grieve a friend when we neglect him, or go contrary to his wishes and interests. And when he

is grieved he betrays it. His countenance is not towards us as aforetime. Frowns succeed to smiles. He complains and reproves. He discontinues his visits and correspondence. All this will apply to the grieving of the holy Spirit of God. And there are three reasons why we should not grieve him.—Nothing can be more unbecoming—ungrateful—unwise.

—Nothing can be more unbecoming, if we consider his greatness. The Holy Spirit is deserving in himself of all the regard we can express. If a nobleman was calling upon you, common civility would teach you not to hurt his mind. If the king honored you with his presence, how anxious would you feel not to offend him; how studious would you be to please him in all your actions, and words, and looks! Here all comparison fails. No mortal is honoured like the Christian, with whom the King of kings and Lord of lords deigns even to dwell. And will he not be sensible of this honour? Will he not exclaim, "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him; or the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Will he not fall upon his knees, and pray, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer?"

—Nothing can be more ungrateful, if we consider his goodness. What obligation was he under to you? You were not worthy of the least of all his mercies: you deserved that his wrath should have come upon you as children of disobedience. Had he therefore left you to perish, you would have had no reason to complain. But who remembered you in your low estate? Who quickened you, when dead in trespasses and sins? Who unstopped your deaf ears, and

opened your blind eyes? Who turned your feet into the paths of peace? Who enabled you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to life everlasting? Who gave you a disposition, a taste, congenial with the work and enjoyment of heaven? Who sealed you unto the day of redemption? But for his gracious agency, where and what would you now have been? And are you forgetful of all this? Are you grieving such a benefactor? Is this thy kindness to thy friend?

—Nothing can be more unwise, if we consider his importance to you. As you are deeply indebted to him for the past, so you are entirely dependent upon him for the future. You live in the Spirit, you walk in the Spirit. Grieve the holy Spirit of God? What! would you grieve your *Leader*, and be left to travel alone? Can you find your way without him? Can you learn without this teacher? Must he not guide you into all truth? What! would you grieve your *Helper*, and be left to act alone in your work? Can you worship without the preparation of the heart and the answer of the tongue, which are from him? Without him, can you order your speech, by reason of darkness? Can you know what to pray for as you ought, unless the Spirit helps your infirmities? What power have you in any duty, unless you are strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man? You may spread your sails, but he must fill them. What! would you grieve your *Preserver*, and be left to contend by yourself against your enemies? Are you a match for the powers of darkness, and the devices of Satan? The first temptation that assaults you alone, may occasion your sinning and falling: and by this you may cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of—ministers to be discouraged—your fellow-Christians



to be distressed—that which is lame to be turned out of the way—while your sin would be ever before you.—What! would you grieve your *Comforter*, and lose your hold of the promises, and be unable to discern your evidences of heaven, and feel your hope decline, and your heart sink in the day of adversity; and be in bondage through fear of death—and groan, “Oh that it were with me as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shined upon my head; and when by his light I walked through darkness, and while as yet the Almighty was with me!”

The comforts of the Holy Spirit can afford such strong consolation, as will revive us in the midst of trouble. According to the Saviour’s assurance, when leaving this world, *his* being with us can more than make up for the loss of his bodily presence. But “when he hideth his face, who then can behold him?” Vain then are friends, ministers, ordinances. “For these things,” saith the Church, “I weep: mine eye runneth down with water, because the Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me”—What infatuation to grieve him!

Yet if there were no danger of this, the admonition would not have been given. Let me not be high-minded, but fear. “Blessed is the man that feareth always.” I have always at hand an active adversary, the Devil. I am passing through a world lying in wickedness. I carry within me an evil heart of unbelief. Every thing without is rendered dangerous by the sin that dwelleth in me. They who far surpass me in every thing have been overcome. Let me therefore watch and pray. “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.”

Nor let me be satisfied with negative religion. Let



it not, O my soul, be enough that I grieve him not. Let me cherish all his motions. Let me walk so as to please him. Let me abound therein more and more.

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## MAY 26.—MORNING.

“Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.”

Ps. ii. 8.

“THE heathen”—“the uttermost parts of the earth;” viewed in the representations of Scripture, and the reports of historians, travellers, and missionaries, seem a very unenviable acquisition. If it be true, that the whole world lieth in wickedness, it seems fitter to be for the inheritance “and the possession” of Satan, than the Son of God. But two things are to be taken into the account. Notwithstanding the present condition of the estate, it contains very *valuable* and *convertible* materials.

Every human being, however depraved and degraded, is a creature of God. He is the work of his hands, and is fearfully and wonderfully made. He has a soul of more value than the material world. The child of a savage is a richer production than the sun. The sun sees not his own light; feels not his own heat; and, with all his grandeur, is doomed to perish—But that child is the subject of reason; the heir of immortality. That child is capable of knowing, and serving, and resembling God, and of filling a sphere of everlasting action and enjoyment. That child will hear the heavens passing away with a great noise, and see the elements melting with fervent heat,

and stand with all the dead, small and great, before God.

And we are also to consider what they may, and will become. Thus the Saviour viewed them, when they were surrendered to him. He pitied them; and he knew he was able to bless them—and he knew that they would not remain what they were; but that for him the wilderness and solitary place should be made glad, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose. He knew it had been said, by Faithfulness and Truth, “Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign, that shall not be cut off.” The more desperate the condition of the patient, the more pleasure does his recovery afford the physician; and the more does it display his skill and ability. So here. All these captives the Redeemer ransoms; and each of them as a justified, sanctified, glorified being, will for ever reflect his honour. He found them at hell’s dark door: but he raises them above the heavens. He found them in the likeness of the Devil; and he adorns them with the image of God. He found them the disgrace of the universe; and he makes them an eternal excellency, the joy of many generations.

What is so interesting and delightful to a man of taste as alteration and improvement? With what pleasure does he view a piece of rude and barren soil, under his cultivation, looking forth, dressed in living green, and abounding with trees and flowers! What pleasure does a benevolent mind feel, when he views

the child he has taken up, exchanging rags for decency, ignorance for knowledge, vicious and idle habits for virtue and industry—and contemplates his comfort, usefulness, and respectability, as the fruit of his kindness and labour! What satisfaction must the Saviour feel, to behold, as the effect of his Cross, and his Grace, the renewal of human nature; the deliverance of province after province from the power of Satan; and the kingdoms of this world coming under the influence of the Gospel! What an inheritance—what a possession will the Heathen and the uttermost parts of the earth be to the Messiah, when Paganism, and Mahomedanism, and the man of sin, shall perish! when the Jews shall come in, with the fulness of the Gentiles! when, in every place, incense shall be offered unto him, and a pure offering! when the nations shall learn war no more! when the people shall be all holy, trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified!

We read of two vast gifts of God in the Scripture: the gift of his Son to the world; and the gift of the world to his Son. The first of these is the greatest; and we ought never to think of it without exclaiming, Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift! But let us think of the other also; and rejoice that our earth is to come under the dominion of the Messiah, and is given to him for this purpose. It is thus to him, as Canaan was to the Jews. Canaan was to them the Land of Promise; and, God having promised it, in vain was every attempt made to keep them from obtaining it. Egypt was plagued; Pharoah and his army were destroyed; the Sea opened a passage for the heirs of promise; Jordan was driven back; and they were brought in triumph to the rest and the in-

heritance, which the Lord their God had given them. So will it be here. All opposition will be as vain as it is unreasonable. His enemies shall lick the dust. The word is gone out of God's mouth, and shall not return, that to him every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, until he shall come whose right it is, and I will give it him.

Let us think of his prospects. We have sympathized with him in his agony and bloody sweat; in his cross and passion. Let us exult at the thought, that he is crowned with glory and honour—and has the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. And what an immensity of subjects will he derive from them! and what an infinity of services! and what an eternity of praises and delights! It was the joy set before him—and he shall see of the travail of his soul—and shall be satisfied.

We ought also to rejoice from a principle of benevolence. His dominion involves the happiness of the human race. Nebuchadnezzar, and other conquerors, had nations given into their hand; but they only enslaved, and impoverished, and cursed their subjects. But,

“Blessings abound where'er He reigns :  
The pris'ner leaps to lose his chains ;  
The weary find eternal rest ;  
And all the sons of want are bless'd.”



## MAY 26.—EVENING.

“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God.”

HEB. xii. 15.

WE are here admonished not to “fail of the grace of God.” There is a difference between failing *of* the grace of God, and failing *from* it. We are persuaded the Scripture gives no real countenance to the doctrine of falling from grace. The certainty of the end includes the necessity of the means; and therefore we can, with consistency, make use of every warning and motive against declension and apostacy, while yet we believe that the righteous shall hold on his way, and are confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. When the angel had announced the safety of all on board, and the apostle believed God that it should be as it had been told him: yet he made no scruple to say to the Centurion and the soldiers, when the mariners were meanly leaving the vessel, “Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.” Dr. Owen, no mean critic, contends that the word here rendered to fail, signifies always to *want*, to *come short*; and never, to fall from actual possession. We say, the trees this year will fail of a crop; we say to a racer, see that you fail not of the prize; and to a warrior, see that you fail not of a victory: and in all these instances we intend not the loss of a thing when obtained, but the not obtaining it. The meaning therefore is, take heed that you miss not the grace of God; or, as it is expressed in an earlier part of the Epistle, “Therefore fear lest, a promise being left you of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to *come short of it*.”



The caution implies

—*Importance*. It is as much as to say, your supreme concern should be to secure the grace of God—This is the principal thing—

“Sufficient in itself alone,

And needful were the world our own.”

Even the devil is good authority here. He knows the worth of what we neglect and despise; and all his aims and devices are to keep us from seeking after it. The grace of God is—The only source of relief under conviction of sin—The only principle of true obedience—The only safeguard of prosperity—The only support under trouble—The only deliverance from death—The only meetness for heaven—The evidence, the earnest, the foretastes, the beginning of eternal life.

It implies *acquireableness*. The admonition would be futile unless the grace of God were within our reach. It is impossible to read the Scripture, and not perceive that the inestimable blessing is not only revealed to our view, but proposed to our hope, and pressed upon our acceptation. We are commanded to be “renewed in the spirit of our minds:” and to be “filled with the Spirit:” but the command, or it would be absurd, involves the possibility of the thing. Grace is laid up in the Mediator for this very purpose. It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell for our use. “He received gifts for men, and even for the *rebellious* also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.” We have also the promise; “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find.” The invitation also is universal: “Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” “Look

unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." We can appeal to actual instances. How many in heaven, how many also on earth, who by nature were all children of wrath, even as others, and in whom was no good thing, are now the partakers of the grace of God in truth! We are encompassed with a great cloud of witnesses; and each of them testifies that he is good and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto *all* that call upon him.

—But it implies *danger*. Unless it was possible, and *very* possible, that we should come short of it, the Apostle would not have expressed himself with such peculiar earnestness—"Looking—diligently;" nor have extended the caution to all, whatever advantages they have in their favour—"Lest *any* man fail of the grace of God." You may fail of the grace of God—Though you were born in a Christian country, and were baptized in your infancy—Though you were born of religious parents, and had a pious education—Though you attend the means of grace, and hear the truth as it is in Jesus—Though you have a clear knowledge of the doctrines of the Gospel—Though you receive into your conviction and belief the faith once delivered to the saints—Though you have spiritual gifts, and can talk well and pray wisely—Though your passions are sometimes pleasingly and awfully excited—Though you have undergone a great change and reformation in your character and conduct—Though many think you have the grace of God, and you are admitted into the church, and admired while you live, and extolled when you die, and the funeral sermon and the magazine may speak of you as having entered into the joy of your Lord—Though you are persuaded yourselves that you are possessed

of it, and carry the confidence to the very door of heaven, saying, "Lord, Lord, open unto us; we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets—but he shall answer, I know you not whence ye are—"

Of the numbers that came out of Egypt only two entered Canaan. Yet they did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink.

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed, lest he fall.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

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MAY 27.—MORNING.

"The dumb spake." MATT. ix. 33.

THIS was a natural dumbness, the cure of which was to be one of the miracles attending the Messiah's advent: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: then shall the lame man leap as an hart—and the tongue of the dumb sing."

But there is a moral dumbness, and the Saviour heals this when he makes us new creatures. Then old things pass away, and all things become new—not physically new, but spiritually new; each faculty becoming new in quality, application, and use. Thus the man has a tongue before, but not a religious one. He speaks before; but now his speech is with grace. Now he speaks—of God—for God—and to God.

He speaks *of* God. Of his perfections. Of his designs. Of his works, and ways. Of his word. Of his commands and promises—a theme for angels.

He speaks *for* God. “On his behalf,” as Elihu says. In defending his truth. In justifying his people. In recommending his service. In pleading his cause. Wisdom is necessary here; and we are to distinguish between places and seasons, and characters. “A word fitly spoken, how good is it! It is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.” Yet caution, though it should qualify our zeal, should not quench it. We should be courageous, as well as discreet—

“And, if some proper hour appear,  
I’ll not be overaw’d;  
But let the scoffing sinner hear,  
That I can speak *for* God.”

He speaks *to* God.—And this is the better evidence of our sincerity. For many speak *of* God, and many *for* him, who never speak *to* him. While the world hears them, and the temple hears them, silence reigns in the closet. But the Christian’s delight is in God, and the duties and exigencies of his spiritual condition will bring him often to His seat; and he will address Him much in a way of adoration, and confession, and intercession, and prayer.

If you are the subject of this grace, use it; and be concerned that the words of your mouth, as well as the meditation of your heart, may be acceptable in God’s sight. Beware of any return of the old malady. There is an occasional, partial, comparative dumbness; and it is brought on by sin. This stops our speech. It did so in the case of David, when he had fallen by his iniquity. It not only broke his bones,



and deprived him of joy, but of confidence, and filled him with fear and silence—He could neither speak, as he had done, of God, or for God, or to God. It is a sad evil; and, if it be your experience, do—it is the best thing you can do—do as he did. Take the case, and lay it before God, and say—“Open thou my mouth, and my lips shall shew forth thy praise.”

## MAY 27.—EVENING.

“And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.” ACTS xxvi. 29.

“SUCH as I *am*.” And what *was* Paul? He was an Apostle. But he does not refer to this, or wish that his audience, like himself, were called to an extraordinary mission, or could speak with new tongues, and discern spirits, and heal diseases, and foretell things to come. He knew official character and miraculous endowments were not things that accompany salvation. Balaam was a prophet, and Judas was an apostle. But Paul was a *Christian*; and to *this* his desire alludes. For his exclamation is in reply to the king’s confession—“Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a *Christian*”—And Paul said, Would to God this was completely the case with thyself and this whole assembly—“Would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were not only almost, but altogether such as I am, except these bonds.”

Thus therefore he not only shews a consciousness of his Christianity, but the estimation in which he held the privilege of his state as a Christian. There was nothing he could wish for others, by an infinite



degree, so important and so valuable. For if they were Christians, he knew—They would be safe: for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. He knew—They would be honourable: the excellent of the earth, kings and priests unto God, the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, the charge of angels, who are all sent forth to minister unto them that are the heirs of salvation. He knew—They would be happy: attaining what all others seek in vain: happy in hope, happy in fruition, happy in their comforts, happy in their duties, happy in their trials. He knew—They would be useful: not only being blessed in themselves, but proving blessings to others; the best benefactors of the human race, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof, the salt of the earth, the light of the world—

But see his benevolence as well as wisdom. The spirit that is in us lusteth to envy. We love things to be exclusively our own. The child is pleased when no one has a bauble but himself. The female is afraid that her fashion should be known: her mode would lose half its value, should the dress of another be as new, and fine, as her own—So it is with all ranks in life. But grace had dethroned this spirit in Paul. See the benevolence of his disposition in three things. First—The extent of his wish. It reaches to *all*. Yet some of his audience were not only heathens and Jews, but his bitterest enemies. Secondly, the degree of it—were not only *almost*, but *altogether* such as I am. It is well to see people like the young man in the Gospel, not far from the kingdom of God. It is well to see them hearing the word, convinced, reformed. But they may be hearers of the word and not

doers; convinced and not converted: reformed and not renewed. It is sad to go far, and come short at last. To be almost justified is to be condemned; to be almost saved is to be lost. Thirdly, the exception—The chain he then wore, and which confined him to the soldier as a sufferer or a criminal, would be deemed painful or reproachful, and tend to scandalize Agrippa: he therefore says, except these *bonds*. This was a fine turn, and shewed Paul to be a man of education and address. But it shews something more than his eloquence. He would not wish others to be tried, especially at first, as he was. *I* would bear willingly all my afflictions, till he for whom I suffer is pleased to release me: but I do not wish others to endure them. Let them have my privileges without my persecutions. Surely the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour! What a noble soul was here! Little and mean spirits can never rise to this. If they wish others to be *equal* to themselves, they cannot wish others *above* themselves. The Elder Brother could not bear the *degree* of the Prodigal's reception—Thou never gavest *me* a kid that I might make merry with *my* friends—Yet for him thou hast killed the *fatted calf*. But angels rejoice when a sinner, by repentance, is brought into a condition superior to their own. And we know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, when he was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich.

But when Paul says, "*would to God*" that this was the case, it is to be considered as a real prayer, and shews not only his benevolence in wishing their conversion, but his belief and acknowledgment of Divine agency as necessary to accomplish it. He owned this with regard to himself. It pleased God to reveal his

Son in me. He called me by his grace. By the grace of God I am what I am—not I, but the grace of God which was with me. He owned it always with regard to others. Read what he says of the Ephesians: “God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) for by grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” How can it be otherwise? If in him we live, and move, and have our being naturally, has the spiritual life, called the life of God, any thing less than a Divine source for its origin and support? Hence the promise, “I will sprinkle clean water upon them—I will put my Spirit within them, and cause them to walk in my statutes.”

To him therefore for this influence let us pray, not only for ourselves, but for others—for our families, friends, neighbours, all mankind. He is the God of all grace, and he answers relative as well as personal prayer. But let one thing be remembered: if our prayers are sincere, it will appear in our exertions; for God uses means, and makes us the instruments of his agency. And he that converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

## MAY 28.—MORNING.

“Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” 2 PET. iii. 18.

IF we consider these words as containing two injunctions, may we not view the second as prescribing the means for the accomplishment of the first? It is certain that there is a supreme excellency in the knowledge here recommended; and that he who would grow in grace, *must* grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

This knowledge is supposed to be progressive. It was gradual even in its communication to the world. Judaism was the dawn; Christianity the day. Prophets and righteous men desired to see the things that we see, and did not see them; and to hear the things that we hear, and did not hear them. There are degrees, also, in its personal attainment and experience—Four ways we may grow in this knowledge.

First. In its *extent*. Who has advanced near the extremities of this field? How little do the wisest know of the treasures hid in it!

“The cross, the manger, and the throne,  
Are big with glories yet unknown.”

Angels know much more than they once did. But they still desire to look into these things—How much more should we!

Secondly. In its *certainty*. This is, and must be, the same in itself; but, as to us, the degree of it depends upon the perception of evidence: and the mind may be led along from possibility to probability, and from probability to full conviction. The firmness of

belief may be strengthened by the confirmations of experience. The whole life of a Christian is a series of tests, by which he tries and proves the word of God. He is, therefore, perpetually increasing in the full assurance of understanding, and has his heart established with grace.

Thirdly. In its *influence*. This implies the former, but is distinguishable from it. There cannot be practical knowledge without speculative. But who will not own that there may be speculative knowledge without practical? Who is ignorant of the difference there is between knowing things in theory, and in experience? between the apprehensions of the judgment, and the bias of the will, and the glow of the affections? Who feels, and fears, and loves, according to his belief? Alas! how often do we see and approve better things, and follow worse! How often are the clearest dictates of the understanding, and even convictions of the conscience, counteracted by our appetites and passions! We believe that we are dying creatures; and live as if we were to live here always! We own ourselves under the providence of Him who doth all things well; and we murmur and repine, as if his dealings were unjust or unkind! We doubt not the Saviour's power and love; and yet we cannot trust in him; and are strangers to consolation and peace!

Fourthly. In its *appropriation*. Job could say, "I know that *my* Redeemer liveth." David said, "God *is* the strength of *my* heart, and *my* portion for ever." The first Christians said, "We *know* that the Son of God is come, and hath given *us* an understanding, that we may know Him that *is* true; and we *are* in him that *is* true." Who does not want more of this delightful confidence, to raise him above the world, to



support him in his trials, to embolden him in his profession, and to enable him to triumph over the fears of death?

O God, preserve me from delusion in a business of everlasting importance! Let me feel a thousand terrors, rather than perish with a lie in my right hand. But if I am thine, save me from the uncertainties I now feel. Give me the full assurance of hope unto the end. Let me know not only that there are exceeding great and precious promises, but that I am an heir of promise—not only that in the Lord Jesus all fulness dwells, but that I am blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in him. Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.

MAY 28.—EVENING.

“I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men?” Job vii. 20.

HERE is a confession, and an inquiry.

The confession seems to have nothing very discriminating in it. The manner in which it is used, and the sentiments from which it proceeds, can alone therefore evince the state of mind in him who employs it. In true penitence the confession will always be strictly personal. We may often hear the expression, “God knows we are all sinners:” but the meaning of the exclaimers is, to bring in others for a share, rather than to condemn themselves; and the universality of transgression is owned, to extenuate the individuality. But, says the real penitent, “Behold, *I* am vile, what shall *I* answer?” “*My* sin is ever before me.” And he confesses not only the fact of his sin, but the fault, the guilt, the desert—“I am

not worthy to be called thy son." "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." And while he is candid towards others, because he knows not the extenuations which attach to their offences, he will be severe towards himself, for he is conscious of the aggravations of his own iniquities. And as sin is the transgression of the law, and the law is spiritual, extending to the state of his heart, and requiring his principles and motives to be good as well as his actions, and condemning omissions of duty as well as positive crimes, with his growing knowledge, his sins enormously multiply in number, and he only speaks the words of truth and soberness when he says, "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me."

True confession is also always accompanied with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Some speak of their sins, if not with pleasure, yet with a kind of indifference. But Ephraim bemoaned himself. The publican smote upon his breast. When Peter thought on his fall, he wept bitterly.

Of course there is also a disposition to sacrifice the evil deplored. Pharoah and Saul more than once said, "I have sinned," yet went on still in their trespass. But he that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall find mercy. He therefore will say, with Ephraim, "What have I any more to do with idols?" He will even pluck out a right eye, and cut off a right hand, and cast it from him. Thus it was with the Ephesian converts. "Many that believed came and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which

used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men; and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver." What a sum to lose! Many would have sold these books; but these persons said, Though they have poisoned us they shall not infect others, and threw into the flames what might have yielded them near two thousand pounds. This was bringing forth fruit meet for repentance. A man, too, when divinely wrought upon, will in his confession acknowledge evils of which natural conscience never accuses us, such as spiritual pride, self-righteousness, and the neglect and contempt of the provision made for the recovery of sinners, by which we frustrate the grace of God, and make Jesus Christ to be dead in vain. When therefore the Saviour says, the Spirit shall convince of sin, he adds, because they believe not on me. And no guilt will affect such a soul like this. And till we are led to the evil heart of unbelief, we overlook the root and the spring of our ruin, and stop only at the branches and the streams.

But here is also an inquiry—I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou Preserver of men? It seems not at first view very intelligible. It may be taken two ways, requiring very different answers. First, what shall I do unto thee in a way of satisfaction or reparation for the wrong I have committed; so as to prevent the consequences of my guilt, and stop thy proceedings against me? This will be the immediate concern of the awakened sinner; and he will be able to give no sleep to his eyes, or slumber to his eyelids, till he finds a solution in his favour. Hence Micah represents such a man as asking, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and

bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" In reply to this, it must be said, we can do nothing, offer nothing. The very attempt would be adding insult to injury. But cannot we repair the evil by future good works and obedience? In the first place we can only obey in the strength of God, and not in our own. Secondly, all the obedience we can render is always due to God, and therefore can never be meritorious in expiation of our offences; the payment of things present will not wipe off the old score. To which also we may add, that our obedience will be incomplete, and therefore, instead of recompensing God any thing, will fall short of his glory, and require pardon for its defects. The man soon sees this, and feels that he can make no atonement himself, and that the redemption of his soul must cease for ever if it depends on any ransom he can furnish. And thus he would lie down in absolute despair, but for the light of the Gospel, which breaks in and shews him what in this case he *can* do. It is not to go about to establish his own righteousness, but to submit himself to the righteousness which is of God. It is not to toil, but believe—"To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." His only course therefore is to appeal; to take with him in the hand of faith the Surety of the new covenant, and to say, "Look upon the face of thine Anointed." "Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man



whom thou madest strong for thyself. So will not we go back from thee; quicken us and we will call upon thy name." Nothing else will avail: nothing else is necessary; but coming in his name, pleading his sacrifice, you will be accepted in the Beloved as if you had never sinned, and God will rejoice over you with joy.

Then, secondly, you will ask, what shall I do unto thee in a way of duty and thankfulness? And the inquiry thus made is not only allowable but commendable, and as to the feelings of the pardoned sinner, unavoidable. Though he has nothing to do unto God, in putting away sin, or bringing in a justifying righteousness, he is infinitely indebted to his goodness. He cannot discharge his obligations; but he feels them, and therefore must ask, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" What service shall I present him, not as a peace-offering, but as a thank-offering? How shall I obey him, not as a slave, but a son? not as a mercenary, but as one who is blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ? To him none of God's commandments are grievous. What he has to do all the days of his life is to love his benefactor, to fear to offend him, to pray that the words of his mouth, and the meditation of his heart, may be acceptable in his sight; it is by the mercies of God to present his body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable; and by him only to make mention of his name.



## MAY 29.—MORNING.

“Ye are the children of the Lord your God.” DEUT. xiv. 1.

THE Jews were so by nation. All men are so by Creation and Providence. Christians are so by special grace; according to the language of Inspiration—“Ye are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus.” “As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his Name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Let us make this relation a standard, by which to estimate four things.

First. The Divine goodness—Here we only follow the example of the apostle John. *He*, even he, could not comprehend it, but he admires it, and calls upon others to admire it with him: “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!” What manner of love! How rich! how free! how expensive! What difficulties stood in the way! Yet he removed them. How, said he, shall I put thee among the children? But he did it. He not only spared and pardoned us; he not only admitted us into his family as servants, but as sons; and for this purpose, he gave his own Son for us, and his Spirit to us. “When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a ser-

vant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God, through Christ."

Secondly. The believer's dignity. Secular nobility derives all its lustre from flesh and blood; and if retraced, will be found to originate in the dust of the ground, from which Adam was taken. It has little value, unless in the fancies of men. But our relation to God confers real and durable honour; compared with which, the most magnificent titles in the world are mere shadows and smoke. How did the Jews boast of having Abraham to their father! "Is it a light thing," said David, a subject, "that I should be son-in-law to the king?" But I think of the majesty and dominion of God! The world is his, and the fulness thereof—I behold the productions of the earth, and the wonders of the skies, and say—

"My Father made them all!"

Thirdly. The happiness of the Christian. The relation has connected with it the promise of pardon: and we daily need it; for in many things we offend all. But I will spare him, says God, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. It gives us free access to God in prayer; and inspires us with confidence and hope of success: "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!" Hence correction: "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Hence education: he does not leave the child to himself; but trains him up in the way that he should go. Hence provision: He who feeds the ravens, will not

suffer the righteous to famish. Their heavenly Father knoweth what things they have need of before they ask him; and will suffer them to want no good thing. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. Many are born to an estate which they never obtain: but here the inheritance is reserved in heaven; and they are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, on earth.

Fourthly. The duty of the saints. Are they all the children of the Lord their God? Then they ought to fear him. If I am a father, where is my fear? This will keep them from offending him. This will make them studious to please him. This will induce them to pray, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer."

As his children, they must walk worthy of God, who hath called them unto his kingdom and glory. We have read of a Polish Prince, who carried the picture of his father always in his bosom; and, on any particular occasion, he would take it out and view it, and say, Let me do nothing unbecoming so excellent a father. Christians, do nothing unbecoming the rank of your family, and the grandeur of your descent. Be harmless and blameless, the Sons of God, without rebuke. Be followers of God, as dear children. Be ye perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.

## MAY 29.—EVENING.

“Because ye are Sons. God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts.” GAL. iv. 6.

WE have heard of benefactors; and we have seen a happy few who seem to value their wealth only as the resource of kindness and mercy; and who make it the business of their lives to do good. But God is love; and all benevolence vanishes from a comparison with the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us. None ever relieved such numbers, succoured so freely, or gave so richly. What are the greatest favours conferred by human generosity? Survey the gifts of God. Consider only two of them—The Son of his love, and the Spirit of his Son—The one given for us; the other to us—The one peculiarly the promise of the Old Testament; the other of the New. Each of these is equally necessary in the process of our recovery. The Christian alike values both: and of both the Apostle here speaks: “When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” And “because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son” into your hearts. Let us attend to the latter of these.

Who are the recipients? “*Sons*”—a name often given to the people of God in the Scriptures. They are subjects, and he is their Sovereign, and they owe him obedience; they are servants, and he is their Master, and they owe him attendance—But these relations do not go far enough: they are not sufficiently affectionate, and near, and privileged, to ex-

press the state of Christians. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon them—They are called the sons of God. And *now* are they the sons of God. And they are so, not only or principally because they are the creatures of his power, but the partakers of his grace. And two ways the title is applied to them exclusively: adoption; and regeneration. For they are not only taken into the household of faith, but they are new born, born again, born of God. Among men these sources of filiation are never united. A man does not adopt those who are begotten of him. And when he admits the offspring of others into family relation, and gives them his name, he cannot convey to them his qualities. He may be generous, and they may be selfish; he may be meek, and they may be severe. He may indeed instruct and admonish them, and exemplify his requisitions in his own life: this is all. But God not only changes our state, but our nature. He works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure—He speaks; he acts like himself—"Behold, I create all things new."

What is the blessing? "*The Spirit of his Son.*" There are several other places in which the Spirit is held forth by this relation to Christ. But wherefore? Peter, speaking of the prophets, says "the Spirit of Christ which was in them, testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow"—It was employed in bearing witness to him from the beginning. Our Saviour also said, "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine and shall shew it unto you." He also personally possessed this Spirit. and was always actuated by it. "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and



understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." But the principal reason of the name is, that he procured this Spirit for us by his sufferings and death; the whole dispensation of it was lodged in his hands; and from *his* fulness all we receive, and grace for grace. Therefore he said to his disciples, "If I depart, I will send him unto you." "I will send you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." And Peter reports the accomplishment in a most signal instance: "Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." It is therefore derived from him to us—"We have an unction from the Holy One."

Where does it reside? "Because we are sons, he hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son *into our hearts*." Here God begins: "he shines in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ." Here he places the riches of his grace, and "a good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." The Lord looketh at the heart. If this be for him, every thing else will follow: but all is nothing without it. What is practice without principle, but a tree without a root, or a stream without a spring! But when the Divine laws are put into our minds, and written in our hearts, our obedience is not only rendered certain, but natural and delightful. God of all grace! fulfil thy covenant engagement in my happy experience—"I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep

my judgments, and do them." And may I "be filled with the Spirit."

We see from the whole the oneness there is between Christ and his people. They are predestinated to be conformed to his image, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. In all things indeed he has the pre-eminence. He is the Son of God in an unrivalled sense; but they also are sons. He had indeed the Spirit without measure; but they have it in degree; for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his—And it is the *same* Spirit that resides in both—"Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." This conformity extends to their future condition as well as their present character. "When he who is their life shall appear, they also shall appear with him in glory." As they now "bear the image of the heavenly," in having in them the mind that was in him, so they will hereafter corporeally resemble him; for "he shall change their vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his own glorious body"—"It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but this we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

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## MAY 30.—MORNING.

"Crying, Abba, Father." GAL. iv. 6.

SUCH is the effect of the Divine communication here spoken of—"Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, *crying, Abba, Father.*" Every thing depends upon our possessing this Spirit; for "if any man have not the

Spirit of Christ, he is none of his:" but "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God, and if children then heirs." Hence it is also called "the earnest of our inheritance."

We should therefore be anxious to ascertain whether we have received the all-important benefit. And it is possible to determine this. For whenever the Spirit of Christ takes possession of the heart, its residence will be evinced—It will operate there. It finds us indeed in darkness, but it opens the eyes of our understanding, and makes us light in the Lord. It finds us earthly-minded and cleaving to the dust, but it induces us to seek those things that are above. The pretensions of a man therefore are vain unless he be made to differ from what he once was. The influence of the Spirit is compared to leaven in the meal, and leaven will work; to fire, and fire will burn; to water, and the spring will flow out in streams—If, says the Apostle, "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts," it is not inactive or silent there, but *crying, Abba, Father*. Let us observe the exercise, and the influence that produces it.

The EXERCISE intended is prayer; but the representation is peculiar. It is not said *what* they will pray for; indeed it would be endless to specify their wants and desires; and "for *all* these things," says God, "will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." But we are told *how* they pray—*Crying, Abba, Father*.

Does not this intimate the *simplicity* of their prayer? "Because," says Solomon, "God is in heaven, and thou upon the earth, therefore let thy words be few:" and how brief, and free from every thing studied and

artificial, are the prayers recorded in the Scriptures, and which were offered by persons under the most powerful and favourable impressions! "Heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee." "Lord, save, I perish." "God be merciful to me a sinner." "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"—Such is the language of feeling—So it is when the heart speaks.

Does it not intimate the *confidence* with which they pray? Among the Persians there was a law that whosoever presented himself before the king, unless he was first called to go in, should be put to death. We have no such prohibition. The golden sceptre to us is always stretched forth. We have a general, a universal invitation to draw near at all times, and in all circumstances, in every thing by prayer and supplication to make known our requests unto God: and are authorized to address him not as the Infinite, the Eternal, the Almighty, the first Cause and the last End of all things; but as our Father, though he is in heaven. It is not the Spirit of bondage to fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father. It is not the address of a criminal to a judge; nor of a slave to a master: but of a child to a Father, to whom he is most intimately related, and who feels in him the claims of nature and affection. "I write unto you little children," says John, "because ye have known the Father." Who is a child so likely to know as his father? What is the first name he utters but "my father, or my mother?" To whom is he so likely to flee in every danger? On whom in every distress will he call so freely for relief? He relies upon his care; he expects that he will teach him, and defend him, and provide for him—And will not God who stands in this endearing relation exemplify it?



And fulfil it *perfectly* and *divinely*? Let this therefore encourage and embolden us in our approaches to him.

Does it not also imply *earnestness*? The word “crying” would express this alone; but here is added to it the reduplication, “Father, Father!” This surely marks eagerness and fervency. The importance of such importunity our Saviour illustrates in the manner of him who spake as never man spake—“Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” He himself also was an example of this. “In the days of his flesh with strong cryings and tears he made supplications to him who was able to save him from death:” and the true condition, exigences, and dangers of his followers when realized and felt will urge them to pray in the same manner.

But does not this indicate the *accordance* of their prayers? Whatever distinctions prevail among them, the Lord gives them one heart and one way. They all kneel before the same mercy-seat; and address the same God, the God of all grace. “Abba” signifies father: but the word is Syriac; and this was, when Paul wrote, the common language of the Jews. The



word rendered father is Greek in the original. And thus we see that the same Spirit would actuate the inhabitants of every country; Jews and Gentiles would appropriate the same relation. "Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes of the Gentiles also." "For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." What father is, in China, in Tartary, or among the Esquimaux, we know not: but he who made them, and gave his Son to die for them, understands all their dialects; and the hour is coming when "the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one."

But we here see the SOURCE of all this—It is the Spirit of God's Son in our hearts that "cries, Abba, Father." It is therefore called "the Spirit of grace and of supplication." And we are said to "pray in the Holy Ghost." It is he that shows us our state, and causes us to hunger and thirst after righteousness. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." He enables us to believe on the Mediator, and thus gives us boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. He makes us spiritually-minded, and renders prayer our privilege; and we feel that is good for us to draw near to God. Hence we are constant in the performance of it: for if we delight ourselves in the Almighty, we shall always call upon God.

A weighty inference is derivable from hence. We cannot say too much in recommendation of prayer

with regard to our trials, duties, and improvements. Prayer is the life of religion—But what is the life of prayer? “The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” Wherefore, first, let us not grieve the Holy Spirit, and cause him to withdraw or suspend his influences. And, secondly, let us pray for the Spirit, that we may pray with it. If there be any inconsistency in this, our Saviour has sanctioned it: “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!”

## MAY 30.—EVENING.

“Ask of me.” Ps. ii. 8.

—THIS is the condition of a very important grant—Ask of me—and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

Whatever appears humiliating in the condition to which the Saviour submitted, let it be remembered that he entered it voluntarily, and knowingly. He was aware that if the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise himself must also take part in the same; and that in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren. He must therefore not only suffer, but obey; and though he was a Son, yet learned he obedience. He must therefore pray. Prayer is the act of an inferior nature; and the Word was made flesh. Though rich, he became poor; and made himself of no reputation.

Many objections are made to prayer. Some of them are specious; but they are all founded on ignorance.

The best way to answer them is to take our stand on the Scripture, and make our appeal. Does not God derive his character and glory from his hearing prayer? Is not his Spirit the Spirit of grace and supplication? Is not this his command—is not this his promise—“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find?” Does He dispense with this, even in the case of his own Son? And can it be dispensable with regard to us? We know his determination: For all these things I will yet be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them—“Ask, and I shall give thee.”

But how was *he* to ask? First, when he was on earth, he prayed like one of us. He prayed alone, and in company with his disciples; he prayed in the Wilderness, and in the Garden, and on the Cross: “In the days of his flesh, he offered up prayers and supplication, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.” Secondly, he continued the presentation of his desire when he entered heaven. We know not whether this was done vocally; but it was done really. Thirdly, he does it relatively. Thus prayer is made for him continually. And whenever individuals, ministers, and churches, pray for the success of his cause—*He* is asking.

And his prayer, and our praying, are founded on the same consideration—his sufferings and death. It was said, that when the Father should make his soul an offering for sin, he should see his seed, and prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hands; he should see of the travail of his soul, and should be satisfied. This was the joy set before him: and, having fulfilled the awful condition on which it was suspended, he pleads for it—*He* therefore asks,

in his *own* Name, and on his *own* behalf. And *we* ask on the *same* behalf, and in the *same* Name: according to his own direction, "Whatsoever ye shall ask, believing, in my Name, ye shall receive."

And this should encourage and embolden us. There can be no more uncertainty attending the success of our asking than of his; for herein we are identified with him. There is no unfaithfulness with God; and he hath said, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

If our prayers are sincere, they must be influential; and we shall exert ourselves in the Redeemer's cause. Nor can we labor in vain. We are on the sure, the rising, the prevailing side. Merchants, heroes, politicians, may all weary themselves for very vanity. We are at a certainty. A king shall reign and prosper. "His Name shall endure for ever: his Name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious Name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen."

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## MAY 31.—MORNING.

"And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them." LUKE xxiv. 30.

THIS was not a *sacramental* meal; as when he took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and said, This is my body. Neither was it a *miraculous* meal; as when he took the loaves and blessed them, and multiplied

them. But an *ordinary* meal; Yet he blessed the food. And this he did always; And his example has the force of a law with all his followers—For, “he that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk even as he walked.” Hence the command, “Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all *in the Name of the Lord Jesus*,” that is, as his disciples, who are not only to believe in him, but to *represent him*.

From *his* observing this practice, we may be sure that it is wise, and useful, and necessary. Sin has brought a curse upon all our enjoyments; and the blessing of God alone can take it off.

“How sweet our daily comforts prove,  
When they are season’d with His love!”

But how true—

“’Tis all in vain till God has bless’d.”

“Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Can he also abuse the bounties of Providence, who has implored the Divine benediction upon the use of them? Can he indulge in excess?—Will he not add to his faith temperance? It is lamentable, therefore, that such a duty should ever be omitted—or performed with haste and irreverence—as if the performer was ashamed of the performance.

Let the Saviour’s conduct also teach us not to confine our religion to extraordinary and sacred occasions. In all our ways let us acknowledge God. Morning and evening worship is good: but let us be in the fear of the Lord all the day long. It is well to inquire in his temple: but let us abide with God in our calling.



We must remember the Sabbath, and keep it holy; but the spirit of devotion is to actuate us during the week, and to induce us, whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, to do all to the glory of God. Tell me not what a man is in a storm—in the calm what is he? Not how he behaves himself in sickness—but in health. A Balaam may pray, Let me die the death of the righteous. A David prays, Unite my heart to fear thy Name. There is a goodness which depends upon impulse, not principle; upon outward excitement, not upon internal disposition.

There is a devotion that resembles the blaze of straw; but that which is spiritual is like the fire on the Jewish altar—kindled from above, and which never went out. It is a stream fed by a living fountain; not a sudden torrent, however wide or impetuous at the time, produced by the melting of the snow, or a summer's thunder shower. The water, says the Saviour, that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

## MAY 31.—EVENING.

“That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” HEB. vi. 18.

ONE of these two things was his promise; the other was his oath. The Apostle acknowledges that both of them were immutable. Why then was the latter added to the former? Not to *constitute*, but to *shew* the immutability of his counsel. It was not to bind himself, but it was for our sakes, that in the condescension of his kindness he might remove from our minds all suspicion of his veracity, by adopting the

last mode of appeal among men; "For verily men swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife"—God therefore swears; and because he could swear by no greater, he swears by himself—"As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth"—"Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more"—"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee—as sure as I am God." Four things result from hence.

We, First, see how hard it is to comfort the conscience, and to inspire us with "a strong consolation," not only while we are fleeing for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us, but even after we *have* fled. We have a controversy with God, and we know that he has much ground against us; and a consciousness of guilt makes us timid and suspicious. Under a sense of our unworthiness the very greatness of the blessing will astonish us into incredulity: "It is too good to be true, at least with regard to such a wretch as I am." Men are frail and false, and we ourselves are weak and changeable; and in judging of him we insensibly transfer something of this to God, if we do not think him altogether such an one as ourselves. How natural and justifiable it seems to give up persons after numberless provocations of ingratitude and vileness! Dark providences apparently oppose the promises: deep and lengthened afflictions depress and weaken the mind, and betray us to think that God has forgotten to be gracious. The blessing we so much desire seems to recede as we advance after it; and hope deferred maketh the heart sick. We look at our work and our danger; and yet feel more of our ignorance and weakness. Experience can not only attest all this, but also add much to the representation. But

here is enough to depress and intimidate—and we may be assured that God does nothing in vain—but he who knows what is in man judged it necessary, not only to speak, but to swear; “that by two immutable things” he might comfort and establish our hearts.

We see, Secondly, How concerned he is for the consolation of his people. He takes pleasure in the prosperity of his servants; and they never appear to such advantage as when they walk in the light of his countenance, rejoice in his name all the day, and in his righteousness are exalted. It is then they do honour to their religion, and commend the ways of godliness to others—“Here are people who are happy in this vale of tears. What we seek after constantly, and never come in sight of, they have found. Their hearts are at rest. How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob; and thy tabernacles, O Israel! Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.” The joy of the Lord is not only their ornament, but their strength. It enlivens them in duty: they never run in the way of his commandments so freely as when God has enlarged their hearts. It emboldens them in their profession—It raises them above the fear of man—It weans them from the world—It bears them up under the trials of life—It raises them above the fear of death. He therefore that is infinitely concerned for their welfare, and knows perfectly wherein it consists, would have them not only safe, but tranquil; not only holy, but joyful; not only walking in the fear of the Lord, but in the comforts of the Holy Ghost; not only possessing real, but “strong consolation.”

We, Thirdly, perceive, What a foundation is laid for the effectual solace of the subjects of divine grace.

What more could God have done than he has done to meet their infirmities, and disperse all their discouragements?—We have not only his word but his oath. Surely he has not only given them “a good hope through grace,” but provided amply for “the full assurance of hope unto the end.” Surely confidence becomes them as well as self-abasement. Surely they ought to attain a certainty of mind, and to be filled with all joy and peace in believing. And why are they not decided? Why do they yet walk mournfully before the Lord?

“Whence then should doubts and fears arise?  
Why trickling sorrows drown our eyes?  
Slowly, alas! our mind receives  
The comforts that our Maker gives.”

Lastly, we learn the perverseness and vileness of unbelief. There is nothing of which men are more tenacious than their reputation for truth. The least imputation thrown upon their veracity, rouses them to demand satisfaction for the unpardonable offence—though it has only regarded their mere word, and not the added solemnity and sanction of an oath. What has God, who is conscious that he is faithfulness itself—what has he to bear with from us! Unbelief not only contradicts him; not only gives him the lie, but accuses him of perjury—“I no more depend upon thy oath than upon thy word”—And yet the thunder stays!

What do we in our retirement? To how little purpose shall we humble ourselves before God, unless we principally grieve over our slowness of heart to believe! Every thing else will be hacking at the boughs with a feather—We must “lay the axe to the



root of the tree”—an “evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.” “Lord, I believe—help thou mine unbelief.”

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## JUNE 1.—MORNING.

“I am the vine.” JOHN XV. 5.

MINISTERS are not to preach themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. But he was his own subject—He preached himself. How could he have done otherwise, concerned as he was to be useful? for

“None but Jesus, none but Jesus  
Can do helpless sinners good.”

And *he* knew this far better than we do.—And who was able to declare what he truly was so well as himself?

—Here he calls himself the vine. A very easy and natural image. And natural images are the most preferable in Divine things. Many writers and preachers love those allusions which shew their learning, and which the uneducated cannot understand. Our Saviour never takes his comparisons from the sciences, and seldom from the arts; but from natural scenery which is obvious and intelligible to all.

A vine is not so remarkable in its appearance as many other trees. In loftiness, it yields to the cedar. In strength, to the oak. In sightliness, to the palm tree and the fir. The greatness of Jesus was spiritual. He had no earthly pomp and riches. Like his kingdom, he was not of this world. Hence it was said, “He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor



comeliness; and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him."

The vine is renowned for its fertility. One single vine, planted by the Empress Lavinia, yielded one hundred and eight gallons of wine in one year—Many grapes grow on one cluster, many clusters on one branch, and many branches on one tree. How many have been saved by the Lord Jesus! In him all fulness dwells. In him we are blessed with all spiritual blessings. What clusters were brought from Eschol, to shew Israel the goodness and fruitfulness of Canaan! And what specimens of heaven; what earnest of the inheritance; what firstfruits of the Spirit, do faith and hope bring believers from him, even while they are in the Wilderness!

The nature of the produce of the vine is delightful and profitable. The fruit is sweet to the taste. The juice it yields cheers and makes glad the heart of man—Give wine to those that be of heavy hearts. It was sometimes used medicinally. The good Samaritan poured oil and wine into the wounds of the bleeding traveller. And he brings us health, and cure, and comfort, and delight, and more than angels' food: for

"Never did angels taste, above,  
Redeeming grace and dying love."

The vine also yields shade; and it was valued for this purpose in the East. Hence we so often read in the Scripture of sitting under the vine and the fig tree. They had walks and bowers made of these; and while the fruit refreshed them, the shelter screened them from the sun. And he is a shadow from the heat; and rescues us from the evil of every annoyance to which we are exposed. I sat, says the Church, under his

shadow with delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

The image, therefore, is pleasing and striking, and aids us in our conception of him, and communion with him. Yet it teaches us as much by contrast as by comparison. A vine is not always green. It does not always bear. It never bears twelve manner of fruits. It does not endure for ever—But all this is true of him.

The fruit of the vine, if taken too largely, will injure the partaker; but there is no danger here—while we are forbidden to be drunk with wine, wherein is excess, we are commanded to be filled with the Spirit. The produce of the vine is only for the body, and for time; but his benefits are for the soul, and eternity. Many cannot obtain the advantages of the vine; but none, however poor and mean, are excluded from the participations of Christ. The image, therefore, is but a humble one; and falls far short of his glory. So does every thing that is employed to shew forth his worth, his glory, or his grace.

“Nor earth, nor seas, nor sun, nor stars,  
Nor heaven, his full resemblance bears :  
His beauties we can never trace  
Till we behold him face to face.”

JUNE 1.—EVENING.

“Ye are the branches.” JOHN XV. 5.

FOR whatever He is, they have a relation corresponding with it. Thus, if he is the king, they are the subjects. If he is the shepherd, they are the sheep. If he is the head, they are the members. Therefore

having said to his disciples, I am the vine, he adds—Ye are the branches.

This reminds us of their union with him. The vine and the branches are connected. The latter are even parts of the former; and it would be absurd for a person to say, I did not hurt the vine; I only injured the branches. Why persecutest thou *me*? said the Saviour to Saul, who was only persecuting his followers. He that touches them, touches the apple of his eye. And, as he is sensible of their wrongs, so he feels every kindness shewn them; and says, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.

This gives them a character of likeness. The branches are the very same kind of wood as the vine; and the very same sap pervades them both. And they that are joined to the Lord are of one spirit. The same mind is in them which was also in Christ Jesus.

This shews their dependence. “The righteous shall flourish as a branch;” but the branch does not bear the tree, but the tree the branch. Whatever likeness there may be, in all things he has the preëminence. He is our life and strength. Abide, says he, in me: as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me: for without me ye can do nothing.

This proclaims their usefulness. The branches are the beauty and excellency of the vine; and *by* these, its vigour and fertility are displayed. He is glorified in his people. He makes them to blossom and yield fruit. He diffuses his goodness through their prayers and lives. In him is their fruit found, as to its source and support—but they bear it—they are the branches

—they are filled with all the fruits of righteousness, which are, by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Let me learn one thing from all this. Let me accustom myself to derive spiritual reflections from all the material objects around me. A taste for natural scenery is pleasing and good in itself. But let me not approach it, as a creature, only to enjoy; or a philosopher, only to admire—but as a Christian also, to improve. Let sense be a handmaid to faith. Let that which is seen and temporal, raise me to that which is unseen and eternal.

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JUNE 2.—MORNING.

“Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort.” PSALM lxxi. 3.

ON what particular occasion this psalm was composed it would not be easy to determine. Neither is it necessary; or perhaps even desirable. It is sufficient to see that David was in much affliction, but well knew that God was his refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore to him he turns with this pathetic language; “Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort.”

It is well to take advantage of our present feelings and circumstances to aid us in our communion with God. Many have supposed that David was now suffering from the rebellion of his son Absalom. If there be truth in the notion, it is not difficult to imagine the scene. Behold him greyheaded; the fire of youth that had heroically encountered the lion, and



the bear, and the Philistine, damped by the chilness of age; his chief counsellor betraying him; the hearts of the people stolen from him; his army inadequate to his defence; himself forced from his palace; fleeing from place to place an exile in his own country; and full of uncertainty as to the issue—at such a time how natural, and suitable, and satisfying, must it have been to realize God as his hiding-place, resting-place, dwelling-place—the *strength* and the *home* of his heart!

What so pitiable as a homeless wretch? A Christian can never be in this condition. There is nothing for which we should be more thankful than domestic peace and comfort: and there are some whose abode abounds with every attraction and delight. But how different is the state of others! They have been stripped of “lover and friend:” those with whom they “took sweet counsel together and walked to the house of God in company,” are no more: their means of hospitality and enjoyment are reduced to straits and privation; or they feel some heart’s bitterness known only to themselves, and which they are not at liberty to divulge—Thus “thorns are in their tabernacle,” and they are ready to cry, “O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest.” But you need not flee *from* your condition; rest may be found *in* it—in the bosom of your God and Saviour. And the less happiness you have in the creature, the more you should repair to his all-sufficiency. Your distresses are designed to urge you to him; and if they have this effect, it will be good for you that you have been afflicted. Thus fine weather leads us abroad, and we sometimes take long walks: but clouds and storms hasten us homeward.



David would find and enjoy God, not only as his habitation, but as his "strong" habitation—such an habitation as would not fall by decay, nor be thrown down by violence, nor entered by any enemy; in which the inhabitant would not only be free from danger, but feel himself secure. But every earthly strong-hold, however befriended by nature or indebted to art, is only a shadow of the safety the believer finds in the perfections and covenant engagements of God. No force, no stratagem of men or devils can prevail to destroy or injure him who has made the Lord his trust. He is kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation: and when he can realize it by faith, his soul dwells at ease; and he is in quiet from the fear of evil.

He would also make use of him under the character of his strong habitation—"Whereunto I may continually resort." Would he then want to repair to him always? Our necessities, our work, our danger require it constantly. We are commanded to pray without ceasing. And if, while we acknowledge and feel the obligation, we are renewed in the spirit of our mind, we shall not lament it. Loving him as well as depending upon him, we shall find it good to draw near to God, and delight ourselves in the Almighty. And we shall never find him, when we want him, inaccessible. There is a way to our strong habitation, and we know the way. There is a door, and we have the key. No sentinel keeps us back; the dwelling is our *own*; and who dares to forbid us all its accommodations and contents?

Kings, however disposed, cannot be always approachable. Owing to the multitude of their claims, and the limitation of their powers, and the importance

of keeping up a sense of their dignity, they are only accessible at certain times, and with stately formalities. But the King of kings allows us to come boldly to the throne of grace: and enjoins us in every thing, by prayer and supplication, to make known our requests unto him. We cannot be too importunate, or by our continual coming weary him.

Who is like unto thee among the gods? Teach and enable me to improve my privilege. Thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.

## JUNE 2.—EVENING.

"They went to Baal-peor, and separated themselves unto that shame." HOSEA ix. 10.

THAT is, to that shameful idol. Many seem disposed to consider idolatry rather as a foolish and harmless thing than as a serious evil. But the Scriptures speak of abominable idolatries, and always connect such worships with the most infamous passions and vices. History attests the same fact; and the more fully and faithfully the subject is examined, the more will idolatry appear to be nothing better than evil personified, the devil deified, and hell formed into a religious establishment. What a force must revenge, cruelty, drunkenness, and sensuality acquire when not only exempted from punishment, but turned into acts of devotion, and considered as services which would render them acceptable to the divinity adored! We cannot enter into exemplifications—It were a shame to speak of those things which were done of them in secret. Who would not encourage Missionary exertions! Who would not cry, day and night,

Let thy way be known on earth, thy saving health among all nations!

But what is said of Baal-Peor will apply to any kind of transgression. When you addict yourselves to sin, you separate yourselves to shame. Hence, says God, "Thou shalt remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth more, because of thy *shame*;" that is, thy sin. Sin is very properly called shame, for it is the most scandalous business in the world, and sooner or later will cover a man with ignominy. It degrades every thing pertaining to him, and makes him viler than the earth. Indeed nothing else *is* truly shameful. It is not shameful that you are obliged to labour; though it is shameful if you do nothing, or have nothing to do—I would rather, says Seneca, be sick than idle. It is not shameful that you are poor: unless your indigence is the offspring of vice. It is not shameful to suffer, unless you are the martyrs of Satan—But it is shameful to be a sinner. Is it not shameful to go uncovered and naked? To possess reason, and play the part of an idiot? To be a coward and flee when no man pursueth? To have liberty at command, and submit to be a slave? To be a thief, and a robber of churches? To be a traitor to the best of sovereigns; a betrayer of the kindest of friends? To be admitted by a benefactor to his table, and enjoy every supply and indulgence; and then endeavour to stab him to the heart? They who are familiar with the word of truth know that these and many other images are employed by the sacred writers to express the disgracefulness of the sinner's conduct.

We may consider the shamefulness of sin three

ways. First, as a penal effect—This is principally future. Of Israel we read, “They shall never be ashamed or confounded, world without end.” And John tells us that Christians will “have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.” But the reverse is true of the wicked, and we are assured that they will “rise to everlasting shame and contempt.” And no wonder—when they find *what* they have sacrificed, and *for* what they have parted with it; when they find *what* they have incurred, and *how* they were warned of it, and admonished against it, and might have escaped it; when they find how they are laid *open* from every disguise and concealment, and their *secret* sins published in the hearing of men and angels as well as of the Judge—Then will they call upon the rocks and mountains, not so much to crush as to cover them from the scorn of the universe. But the penalty begins here; even here a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame; and, even when secured from legal inflictions, he draws upon himself disgrace, and has “many a curse.”

Secondly, as a natural emotion. Thus, when Adam and Eve had transgressed, they hid themselves among the trees of the garden; so closely did shame tread on the heels of sin. This class of feelings may in a great measure be subdued by continuance in sin, which is of a hardening nature. We read of some who “hide not their sin, as Sodom.” Jeremiah says, “Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? Yea, they were not ashamed, neither could they blush.” But though shame is not a universal, it is a very general sentiment; and it is not easy or perhaps possible to get rid of it entirely. Before their fellow-creatures, men may profess what is very inconsistent with



their convictions alone ; they may pretend to laugh, and to enjoy self-approbation, while their understandings reproach them as much as their consciences condemn. Why do the wicked repair to corners and elude observation, if they were not doing what tended to their disparagement, for in many of these cases they run no risk unless with regard to their reputation ? If not ashamed of their practices, why attempt to deny or palliate ? why frame excuses and apologies ? why plead ignorance, mistake, surprise, temptation ? why ascribe their sins to necessity, or weakness, rather than inclination and choice, unless they deem them reproachful ?—Hence too the sinner cannot endure to be alone : and, though naturally full of self-love and admiration, he slips away from his own presence, and shuns intercourse with his greatest favourite, himself, because he cannot bear to reflect upon his conduct. Hence too after a while he renounces the moral world, and mingles only with those of his own quality, where mutual wickedness prevents mutual accusation, and censure, and scorn.

Thirdly, as a penitential experience. This is the result of divine grace. It regards not so much the opinion of our fellow-creatures as the judgment of God ; not so much our character as our guilt ; not so much the punishment as the pollution of sin ; not so much its consequences as its odiousness and desert. And this extends to every thing sinful. For some sins are generally if not universally offensive ; but all sin is the abominable thing which the soul of a true penitent hates. When a man is enlightened to see sin in the glass of the law, and in connexion with the glory and goodness of God, and in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, what self-condemnation and re-



proach does he feel! The publican "would not lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast." David cries, "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me that I cannot look up." Ezra said, "O my God, I am ashamed to lift up my face to thee; for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." Blessed experience! If painful, it is salutary. It attracts the Divine regard. It is a time of love, in which he says unto us, "Live." "He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light." "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented: and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."

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## JUNE 3.—MORNING.

"—— Which is our hope." 1 TIM. i. 1.

MUCH has been said in praise of hope. It has been called the mainspring of motion. The soul of enterprise. The balm of life. The soother of care. And the healer of sorrow.

We are not, however, going to speak of hope in general. We, therefore, say nothing of the hope of the worldling, which is a thing of nought. Or of the hope of the infidel, which is annihilation. Or of the hope of the Antinomian, which is a devil's dream. Or of the hope of the Pharisee, which is a spider's web. Or of the hope of the hypocrite, which is a lie in his right hand. But of *our* hope—as Christians. And what is this? Jesus Christ, says the Apostle—he “is *our* hope.” He deserves and realizes the character four ways—He is our hope substantially, meritoriously, efficiently, and exemplarily.

He is the object of our hope. There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? But *any* good will not answer the wishes of a believer. His supreme aim is the—principal, the—only good—It is, to win Christ; to be found in him; and in him to be blessed with all spiritual blessings.—The Christian's hope is chiefly laid up for him in heaven. And is not He the essence of all the blessedness there? The place is glorious; but what would it be without his presence? The company is attractive: but what would friends, and saints, and angels be, without communion with Him?—We sometimes hear it said, “Well—we are hoping for the same heaven!” But nothing can be more false. A natural man is hoping for one kind of heaven; a spiritual man for another: and each herein follows his peculiar disposition. I cannot hope for what I do not love and desire. As a man, I may hope for a heaven that shall secure me from hell; and exempt me from all toil and trouble; and furnish me with things in which I feel pleasure. But it is only as a Christian, I can long to depart to be with Christ, which is far better—

He is the ground of our hope. In proportion to the use and grandeur of a building should be the basis. Nothing can equal the vastness and value of the believer's expectation. If we are wise, therefore, we shall inquire what is to bear it up. And no other foundation can any man lay than that is laid, which is Christ. Every thing else we depend upon will prove sand. But here is rock: and he that believeth on him shall not be ashamed. View him as incarnate—Why is not our condition as hopeless as that of devils? Verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham—Because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise himself also took part of the same. He assumed the nature he would save; and he will save, as surely as he assumed it. View him as the gift of God—God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son. What can discourage us now? If our unworthiness, or the greatness of the blessing, could prove a hinderance to the Divine goodness, it would have operated earlier; and he would have withholden from the guilty *this* unspeakable gift—He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also give us all things! But his goodness is wise goodness, just goodness. It must be as honourable to himself as it is beneficial to us—and we behold his Son set forth as a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness. Sin is punished, while it is pardoned. Even the Law has nothing to complain of in our deliverance—it is much more glorified in our salvation than it would have been by our destruction. One died for all: and he was infinitely more than all. Do we question whether he finished the work that was given him to

do ; and whether it was an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweetsmelling savour ; and whether he shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied ? Behold him discharged from the grave, and ascending up on high, and receiving gifts for men, even for the rebellious, and entering into the holy place, there to appear in the presence of God for us ! What can we desire more ? If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more now, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. “ Who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” Will not this suffice ? He raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that *our faith and hope might be in God.*

He is the author of our hope. For it is not natural to us, neither is it derived from ourselves ; but he produces it in us by his Holy Spirit. Means must be used ; but the excellency of the power is of him, and not of them. Hence says the Apostle to those who were glorying in men, Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man ? Every thing in the new world is done by the Spirit of Christ. Under a conviction of guilt enough to condemn us a thousand times over—did we find it an easy thing to hope in God at first, and believe that he was pacified towards us for all that we had done ? and that we were accepted in the Beloved ? Have we proved it an easy thing since, to keep this hope lively and flourishing ? or even to maintain it at all ? How often should we have said, My hope is perished from the Lord, and have given up all our profession, but for “ the supply



of the Spirit of Jesus Christ," in glorifying him afresh—according to the promise, "He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you!"

He is also the model of our hope. For though he is unspeakably more than our example, he is nothing less; and the higher views we have taken of him do not hinder, but, indeed, the more require our saying, that the same mind which was in him must be in us—that we must walk even as he walked—that we must pray as he prayed—fear as he feared—and hope as he hoped. And how did he hope? "I will," said he, "put my trust in Him." It was not to quote prophecy, that his insulters, when he was on the cross, said, "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him; for he said, I am the Son of God"—It was to reproach him for the confidence in God, which they knew he had professed to exercise. It will be well, if our enemies can revile us for nothing worse. David seems early to have been dedicated to God; but it was in the name of the holy child Jesus he spake, when he said, "Thou art he that took me out of the womb; thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breast. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly." From his earliest infancy, from the first exercise of reason he honoured him—Nor did he ever fail in his confidence in God. In every extremity he trusted in him. Even when in anguish on the cross, and dying, he cried, "*My* God, *my* God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—"Father, into *thy* hands I commit my spirit." His confidence, also, was equally cheerful. He sung a hymn when he was entering the Garden of Gethsemane. Though a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, instead of murmuring, he



said, "In the midst of the Church will I sing praises unto Thee." Thus may I bear the image of the heavenly, till he shall appear, and I shall be perfectly like him; for I shall see him as he is.

## JUNE 3.—EVENING.

"Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad."  
ACTS xi. 23.

GRACE means Divine influence; and is so called because it is derived from the free and undeserved communication of God. But is not this grace an internal principle? How then could Barnabas see it? He could see it only in the effects. We cannot see life in itself; but we can see the sparkling eye, and the ruddy countenance, and the outstretched arm, and the moving foot. We need not cut down a tree, and lay open the body, to see by the grain of the wood of what sort it is. There is another and a better way—It is, to judge by the bark, the leaves, the blossoms, the fruit. "For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes." God says, "I will put my Spirit within you"—But how can this be seen? "And cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them"—This is discernable enough. James says, "I will shew thee my faith by my works;" that is, I will evince my creed in my conduct, and my principles in my practice—And this is the most satisfactory mode of shewing them.

God determines to get himself glory by his people in this world; and therefore it is said, "all that see

them shall acknowledge that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed." But if his grace is to be thus seen and owned in them, there must be something in them more than experience. We are far from undervaluing experience; there is no real religion without it; and it is from your inward dispositions you must chiefly assure your own minds before God: but as to others, they cannot read your hearts—but they can read your lives; and therefore in your lives your godliness must appear. Therefore it is said, "to the prisoners, go forth; to them that are in darkness, shew yourselves: they shall feed in the ways, and their pasture shall be on all high places." And again: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Much of the minds of persons may be discovered, by the objects which awaken their attention and desires when they first enter a place. Some look after natural scenery. Some after curiosities. Some after kinds and modes of trade. Some after machinery, and buildings, and libraries. They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. Barnabas, as soon as he came to Antioch, looked about for displays and instances of Divine agency; and when he saw the grace of God, "he was *glad*." The sight would not have been pleasing to all. The enemy of souls would have been enraged at the prospect. The elder brother would not go in to share the joy of the father and the family; and was offended at the Prodigal's return and reception. So are Pharisees now—

"While the wide *world* esteems it strange,  
Gaze and admire, and hate the change."

But salvation is "the pleasure of the Lord." Angels, in the presence of God, rejoice over one sinner that repenteth. And every convert may say, with the Royal Penitent, "They that fear thee will rejoice when they see me, because I have hoped in thy truth"—

Love to God made Barnabas rejoice. What is every sinner called by grace but an accession to his subjects; an enemy turned into a friend; who shall shew forth his praise by living to his glory, and by being a monument of his mercy and power? "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

Benevolence made him glad. And Barnabas was a good man, as well as full of the Holy Ghost and of faith. What generous mind can see without feelings of pleasure the hungry fed, the destitute clothed, the sick recovered, the captive loosened from his chains? But what is every other deliverance compared with salvation from the evil of sin? What is every other acquisition to the gain of that godliness which is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come? *He* prospers whose soul prospers and is in health. *He* is free indeed whom the Son makes free. *He* is rich who has the gold tried in the fire. And every subject of divine grace is not only blessed in himself, but is made a blessing to others. He is now become one of those who, by their prayers, example, and endeavours, are the greatest benefactors of the human race. They are "a dew from the Lord; as showers upon the grass." "For them the wilderness and solitary place shall be

made glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." When we see a sinner turned into the way of life, who can imagine what he may become? That persecutor now asking, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? may preach the faith that once he destroyed. That profane tinker now beginning to weep and pray, may become a writer, and, by his *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Holy War*, may charm and edify the Church to the end of time.

Barnabas rejoiced as a minister. Some enter the sacred calling, only looking after support, emolument, or fame. The salvation of souls is nothing to them. But with "a man of God" it is the end of his office, the answer of his prayers, the reward of his labours, his best hire. Such a man has the spirit of his function; and among all his tribulations nothing comforts him like success in the conversion and edification of his hearers—he lives if they stand fast in the Lord.

But Barnabas, though a minister, had not been the means of producing the grace of God which he saw; yet he was glad when he saw it. Some cannot rejoice in the good done by others, especially by those who are not of their own community. They would confine the work of the Lord to the pale of their own denomination; and are grieved rather than pleased when they see another casting out devils in his name, because he walketh not with them. But a Barnabas can say, not only, "Let him alone," but, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." Let God employ and bless what instruments *he* pleases—Therein I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

## JUNE 4.—MORNING.

“The woman then left her waterpot.” JOHN iv. 28.

THREE reasons may be assigned for this—

Perhaps she left it from kindness to our Saviour and his disciples. His disciples had gone into the city to buy meat, and had just returned: and they were now going to partake of their homely fare. But for beverage, they had nothing to draw with, and the well was deep. She therefore leaves them her vessel, to enable them to draw and drink. *Female* kindness, and contrivance and accommodation, are as quick as thought; and never need a prompter. I admire the simplicity of early hospitality. See Rebekah with Abraham’s steward: “And she said, Drink, my lord; and she hasted, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink.” Ah! ye generous hearts! who wish to do good, and feel your want of power—do what you can. And remember the Saviour’s words: “Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily, I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.”

Perhaps she left it from indifference. She was now so impressed and occupied with infinitely greater and better things, that she forgets the very errand that brought her to the well. The feelings of new converts are peculiarly strong and lively. The eternal realities and glories that open to their view dazzle their minds, and render them incapable of distinctly observing other objects. Considering the infirmity of our nature, it is not to be wondered at, if the powers of the world to come, and the “one thing needful”—



the care of the soul, should, for the time, engross all their attention, and make them *too* heedless of other claims.

Hence what we should censure in others, we excuse in young beginners, especially if they are suddenly awakened. I say, excuse—for we never wish to justify ignorance, imprudence, and rashness. God is not the God of confusion: "Let every thing," says the Apostle, "be done decently, and in order." Religion is not to draw us off from our business and callings. Neither are we to leave our places and stations in life, even in pursuit of things good in themselves. When the demoniac had been dispossessed, he besought the Saviour that he might be with him—Yet "Jesus suffered him not;" but said, Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done for thee. And says Paul to the Thessalonians, "Study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands"—to provide things honest in the sight of all men; to maintain your families without dependence; and have, to give to him that needeth; and to preserve your religion from censure. We are not, therefore, to abandon our waterpots. We are not to be careless of our worldly substance; but to preserve and use it. Witness the cautions in Scripture against suretyship, and *backing bills*, and the admonition, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost"—Yet those who are born from above, and bound for glory, are only strangers and pilgrims upon earth: and they who have found the pearl of great price, will not, and cannot, feel towards worldly things as they once did. They cannot be so anxious to gain them; so overjoyed in possessing them; so depressed in losing them. And they will be willing to

forsake whatever the service of God requires them to part with, however dear or valuable. Thus Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom, upon hearing the call, "Follow me," "arose, and followed him."

Perhaps she left it, as it would have proved a hindrance to her speed. The king's business requires haste. In this she was now engaged; and, burning with zeal, she could not bear the thought of losing a moment in communicating the knowledge she possessed; and of saying to her neighbours, Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did—Is not this the Christ? She knew the importance of the case. And she knew the brevity and uncertainty of the opportunity. It was not the gratification of their curiosity—it was their life. And if he withdrew from the well before they arrived, the day of their visitation might never return.

Upon the same principles, let us get rid of every impediment, and avoid every delay, not only in gaining good for ourselves, but in doing good to others. All is pending—upon the moment! "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

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JUNE 4.—EVENING.

"O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee." PSALM xlii. 6.

AFFLICTIONS are often in the Scriptures called temptations and trials. The reason is, because they serve to prove and evince our principles, dispositions, and resources. It is natural, and almost unavoidable

for men in difficulties and distresses to repair to something that promises to afford deliverance, or at least to temper the bitterness of sorrow. And as every creature is insufficient to succour them, their applications are various and numerous, and none of them are available. Therefore at last, disappointed and confounded, they class the comforts with the crosses, and the good with the evil, and acknowledge "*all* is vanity and vexation of spirit."

The believer has only one resource; but this is an adequate, and an infinite relief. And therefore, instead of running up and down the earth, asking, "Who will shew me any good?" he says, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." It is not improper, as a brother is born for adversity, to go to a dear and valued connexion, and, pouring out tears into his bosom, say, O my friend, my soul is cast down within me—But it is better for the eye to pour out tears unto God! Far better to look upward, and say, with David, "O *my God*, my soul is cast down within me"—

David claims God as *his* God. And how desirable is it when we address him, especially in trouble, to be able to deal with him on the ground of assured interest in him! It is therefore promised; "I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, the Lord is my God."

Yet his claim does not hinder his complaint. Many are perplexed by what, if properly viewed, might rather encourage them. They exclaim, "If I am

his, why am I thus?" Not considering that they are thus because they are his. They are pruned because they are vines; they are put in the furnace because they are gold; they are chastened because they are sons—for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? They think their depressions are peculiar—But David was a man after God's own heart, and had more experimental religion than any individual before the coming of Christ; yet he was not only afflicted, but his distress broke through to his mind, and pressed him down to the ground—"My soul is cast down within me." While all is calm and vigour within, the pressure of outward calamity is easily borne. The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?—and who can cure? Only the God of all grace, and the God of all comfort. Let us therefore go to him. He alone can alter the state and frame of our minds who has access to them, and dominion over them. When a watch is disordered, to have it examined and rectified we naturally take it to the maker, who knows all its powers and movements: so God is the former of our spirits, and he can set them right again—"Therefore," says David, "I will remember thee."

Such a resolution is not natural to us. God deserves indeed our remembrance, and is perpetually demanding it. He addresses us by his word; he speaks to us by conscience—but in vain. He endeavours to awaken our attention and regard by a profusion of benefits—but though the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, we do not know or consider. He therefore tries a different expediency—"I will go and return to my place till they acknowledge their offence and seek my face; in their afflic-



tion they will seek me early." What we refused to see and hear we are made to feel. His captivity led Manasseh to pray to the God of his father. The famine made the Prodigal think of his father's house. What brought so many to our Saviour in the days of his flesh but personal and relative trouble? It is the same now. He breaks up our earthly prospects, and then presents a better country to our pursuit. He removes the human arm on which we leaned, and then offering his own, says, "There—take hold of my strength." He hedges up our way with thorns, and makes a wall, that we cannot find our paths while following after our lovers; so that we have only one passage open—and this is to go back—and back we must return—if we would find him whom we had forsaken—for *he* remains where he was—and instead of rejecting us, cries, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings."

And thus the same method which brings God to our remembrance at first is useful after in the whole of our religious life, for the same purpose. For we are not already perfect. Our affections are sometimes chilled, and our minds are often turned away from our portion by other things. And there is peculiar danger of this evil in easy and prosperous circumstances. It is when our gourd flourishes, and we sit under its shadow with delight, that we are ready to say, "It is good for us to be here:" and so "to forget our resting-place." But God loves us too well to suffer us to take up with anything short of himself. He does not stand in need of us; but he knows that without him we are miserable. He therefore brings us into conditions which shew us the weakness and wretchedness of the creature; and induce us to inquire



“Where is God my maker that giveth songs in the night?” Then we think of him—And whom can we think of so properly and efficiently in the hour of distress? When therefore our souls are cast down within us, let us remember him. Let us remember his power. Is any thing too hard for the Lord? Let us remember his wisdom. He knows how to afflict; and he knows how to deliver. Let us remember his goodness. Our welfare is his aim in every dispensation, however trying. He spared not his own Son. Let us remember his providence. He is always near us. He numbers the hairs of our head. Let us remember his holy covenant. What promises does it contain! It insures every thing we need. This was all David’s salvation, and all his desire.—This is my comfort in my affliction; thy word hath quickened me—And how many can say after him—

“Had not thy word been my delight,  
When earthly joys were fled;  
My soul, oppress’d with sorrow’s weight,  
Had sunk amongst the dead!”

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## JUNE 5.—MORNING.

“Be thou their arm every morning.” ISA. xxxiii. 2.

THIS is a prayer for others. And when we repair to the throne of the heavenly grace we should never forget our fellow-Christians. Yet those will never pray earnestly, or even sincerely, for others, who do not pray for themselves. Every believer, therefore, includes himself in the number of those for whom he

implores the blessing—"Be thou their arm every morning."

He is made sensible of his own weakness and insufficiency. He knows, he feels, and he increasingly knows and feels his need—of an arm—a Divine arm—every morning.

—For what purpose?

He needs this arm to defend him in all his dangers, and to keep him from all evil, especially the evil of sin, that it may not grieve him.

He needs this arm to uphold him under his burdens. The pressure often urges him to exclaim, "Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me."

He needs this arm to lean on, in all his goings. What a journey lies before him! And what step can he take alone? This is the image of the Church. She is represented as coming up out of the wilderness, leaning on her Beloved.

And as this arm is necessary, so it is sufficient; and it is kindly held out in the promises and invitations of the word—"There," says God, "let him take hold of my strength." And we take hold of it by faith and prayer.

Let me then avail myself of the privilege—Be thou my arm every morning. Let me lean—and converse with thee. Let me lean, and feel thee at my side. Let me lean—and go forward without dismay or discouragement. "Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not suffer thine Holy one to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore."

## JUNE 5.—EVENING.

“Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day.” DEUT. xxxii. 46.

“ALL these words” were the language which he had just ended, the histories which he had recapitulated, and the positive ordinances and moral injunctions which he had again laid before them. Now if Moses enjoined the Jews to attend cordially to a portion of Revelation comparatively small, how much more does God require us to pay this regard to the whole ! See then that ye refuse not him that speaketh ; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven. He is *now* saying, “Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day.”

Set your hearts to HEAR all these words. When you are forbidden to be hearers only, it supposes that you are hearers really ; and when you are admonished to take heed *what* you hear, and *how* you hear, the practice itself is enjoined in the very regulation of the mode. Hearing is not only a duty, but a privilege. And when we consider not only the adaptation there is in preaching to produce the effect, but the blessing of God that attends his own institution, we need not wonder that “faith cometh by hearing.”

Set your hearts to READ all these words. We cannot be hearing always ; and there are times when we cannot hear at all. In such cases, reading is a substitute for hearing ; and in all others, reading must accompany and follow hearing. We cannot dispense with it at the family altar, or in our private retire-

ment, without injury and sin. Hale could say, in one of his letters to his children, "If I omit reading a portion of the Scriptures in the morning, nothing goes well with me through the day."

Set your hearts to UNDERSTAND all these words. "Let him that readeth understand"—Without this, the perusal will be little more than a mere mechanical exercise. We should endeavour to obtain clear and consistent views of the subject that comes under our notice; we should pause and reflect; we should consider the design of the writer in the paragraph; observe the strain of his language; compare one part of the contents with another; and pray for the Spirit that guides into all truth.

Set your hearts to REMEMBER all these words. "By which," says the Apostle, "ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I have written unto you." Our memory should be like the ark in which were kept the golden pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the law. Nothing can affect us morally when it is out of the mind. Some, to excuse their recollecting so little of what they read, and hear, complain of their memory. Yet they recollect other things without number—This shews the natural faculty is not wanting. "But we can remember some things so much easier than others." This adds to our censure. For what things are they which you *do* remember most easily? Are they not those with which you are most familiar? to which you are most attentive and attached? and which are most suitable to your taste? And should not this be the case with the things of God? Can a woman forget her sucking child? Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?

Set your hearts to the PRACTICE of all these words.

It cannot be imagined that they are written only to amuse curiosity, or inform the mind, or furnish materials for conversation and controversy—What are its warnings unless we are cautioned by them? or its promises unless we embrace them? In vain it shews unto us the way of salvation, unless we walk in it. It cannot profit us unless it be mixed with faith: and it works effectually in them that believe. “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.” “Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.”

Set your hearts to RECOMMEND and DIFFUSE them. Begin at home. “Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.” Hold forth the word of life wisely in your discourse, accompanied with every holy and lovely temper. Furnish with a copy those who are destitute. Feel an anxiety that every human being may have a Bible. For this purpose encourage and aid that glorious institution whose godlike and only aim is to spread the Scriptures at home and abroad, till the earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the seas. Thus set your hearts unto all the words of this testimony.

—It is the command of God; and he who lives in the neglect of it is a rebel as much as a thief or a murderer. It is the command of the great God, who is able to enforce it. It is the command of the good God, who has conferred so many benefits, and has so



many claims upon you. It is the command of the only wise God, who knows what is needful for you, and only demands what is a reasonable service.

—All these words too are Divine—All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. The very name of some authors would be enough to induce you to purchase and devour a publication. On the back of my Bible is inscribed, *THE WORKS OF GOD*.

They are also all-important. They are not a vain thing, but our life. They are our standard. Our rule. Our medicine. Our shield. Our sword. Our bread. Our water. Our sun. The charter of our everlasting privilege—Who can tell what it has done for numberless individuals? For communities? For nations?—Who can tell what it will do in the ages to come?

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## JUNE 6.—MORNING.

“And walk humbly with thy God.” *MICAH vi. 8.*

WHY not joyfully? There is a foundation laid for this. It is their privilege; and it is said, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord. This is not, however, absolutely necessary. In a sense, Christians may go on without it. We have known much self-denial, and deadness to the world, and spirituality of devotion, and zeal for the glory of God and the welfare of others, in persons who may be said to be saved by hope rather than confidence. But with regard to humbleness of mind, this is indispensable—*always*, and in *every* thing—and *no* progress can be made without it. So that when Luther was asked what was the first step in religion, he replied, Humility; and when

asked what was the second, and the third, answered in the same way. And Peter admonishes Christians to be clothed with humility; as if he would say, This is to cover, to defend, to distinguish, to adorn all. But how is our walking humbly with God to appear?

It is to appear in connexion with divine truth. Here God is our teacher; and if, as learners, we walk humbly with him, we shall cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of Christ: we shall sacrifice the pride of reason; and having ascertained that the Scriptures are the word of God, and discovered what they really contain, we shall not speculate upon their principles, but admit them on the Divine authority. Nothing can be more proud and vain than to believe no more than we can comprehend, or can make appear to be credible in itself. Is not this founding our faith on knowledge, and not on testimony? Is not this trusting God like a discredited witness in court, whose deposition is regarded only as it is collaterally supported? Is this honouring his wisdom, or veracity? Is this receiving with meekness the engrafted word? Is this receiving the kingdom of heaven as a little child?

It will appear in connexion with divine ordinances. Here we walk with God as worshippers; and if we walk humbly with him, we shall have grace, whereby we may serve him acceptably, with reverence and with godly fear. We have, indeed, in Christ, boldness and access with confidence; but it is by the faith of him; that is, by the confidence of one who feels his encouragement derived from a mediator. We may come boldly to the throne of grace: but it is to obtain *mercy*,

and find *grace* to help us: the boldness, therefore, can only be the boldness of the indigent and the guilty, who have nothing of their own to plead. We approach him as a father: but if I am a father, says He, where is mine honour? We have heard some address the Supreme Being with such levity and freedom as they would not have used to a fellow-creature a little above their own level in life. We should keep our feet when we go to the house of God. He is in heaven and we upon the earth, therefore our words should be *few*.

It will appear in connexion with his mercies. Here we walk with God, as our benefactor: and if we walk humbly with him, we shall own and feel that we have no claim upon God for any thing we possess or enjoy. Am I indulged? I am not worthy of the least of all his mercies. Am I distinguished?

“Not more than others I deserve;  
Yet God has given me more.”

Am I successful? I shall not ascribe it to my own skill, or to the power of my own arm. I shall not sacrifice to my own net, or burn incense to my own drag. The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.

It will appear, with regard to our trials. Here we walk with God as our reprover and corrector: and if we walk humbly, we shall not charge him foolishly; we shall not arraign his authority; or ask, What doest thou? We shall not expose ourselves to the reflection, Thou hast smitten them, and they have not grieved. We shall be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live. We shall be dumb, and open not our mouth, because He does it. Or, if we speak, it will be to

acknowledge that his judgments are right, and that in faithfulness he has afflicted us. "I mourn; but I do not murmur. I wonder not that my troubles are so heavy; but that they are so light. I more than deserve them all—and I need them all. I would not only bear, but kiss the rod. It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good."

It will appear, with regard to our conditions. Here we walk with God as our disposer and governor: and if we walk humbly, we shall hold ourselves at his control; we shall be willing that he should chose our inheritance for us; we shall not lean to our own understanding, but in all our ways acknowledge him. We shall be satisfied with our own allotment; and learn, in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content. We shall abide in the callings wherein his providence has placed us, and not be eager to rise into *superior* offices, feeling our unfitness for them and fearful of their perils; saying, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty, neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child."

It will appear, with regard to our qualification and ability for our work. Here we walk with God as our helper and strength: and if we walk humbly, we shall be sensible of our insufficiency for all the purposes of the divine life. We shall feel that we know not what to pray for as we ought, unless the Spirit itself helpeth our infirmities; that the preparation of the heart, and the answer of the tongue, are from the Lord; that, with regard to the exercise of every grace, and the performance of every duty, as the branch cannot bear

fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can we, except we abide in him, for without him we can do nothing. Did Peter walk humbly with him when, even after the warning he had received, he leaned on his own resolution, for superior constancy? Here humility is—to fear always; and—to pray, Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.

It will appear, with regard to the whole of our recovery. Here we walk with God, as a Saviour; and if we walk humbly, we shall not go about to establish our own righteousness, but submit ourselves unto the righteousness which is of God; and acknowledge that we have nothing to glory in before him. Not by works of righteousness which I had done, but according to his mercy he saved me. I look on the rock whence I was hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence I was digged. How long did he wait for me! What pains were used in vain to bring my heart to him! He was found of me, when I sought him not. And how little have I attained! I am still an unprofitable servant. The sins of my holy things would condemn me—I must look only for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. If I am called, he called me by his grace. If I have a good hope, it is a good hope through grace. By the grace of God I am what I am.

Happy this humble walker with God! God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

“All joy to the believer! He can speak—  
Trembling, yet happy; confident, yet meek.  
Since the dear hour that brought me to thy foot,  
And cut up all my follies by the root,  
I never trusted in an arm but thine,  
Nor hoped, but in thy righteousness divine.



My prayers and alms, imperfect and defiled,  
Were but the feeble efforts of a child ;  
Howe'er perform'd, it was their brightest part,  
That they proceeded from a grateful heart,  
Cleansed in thine own all-purifying blood,  
Forgive their evil, and accept their good ;  
I cast them at thy feet—my only plea  
Is, what it was, dependence upon thee—  
While struggling in the vale of tears below,  
That never fail'd nor shall it fail me now.  
Angelic gratulations rend the skies ;  
Pride falls unpitied, never more to rise ;  
Humility is crown'd, and Faith receives the prize."

## JUNE 6.—EVENING.

"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." GEN. xxxii. 24;

JACOB was now returning with a large family and much abundance from Haran, and the house of his infamous uncle Laban. Thither he had fled from the face of his brother Esau, till his fury should be abated. But his resentment seems not to have yielded to time; for Jacob is informed of his approach, and four hundred men with him, and no doubt with murderous design. Here was an embarrassment! But God had said to him, "Return;" and he had also said, "I will surely do thee good"—This was his encouragement. But what was his conduct? It equally expressed prudence and piety. He sends forward a present, with a soft answer, that turneth away wrath; and then he has recourse to prayer. For except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. When we have arranged our plans, and secured our means, and done all that we can do in order to

secure success, we must cast our care upon him that careth for us, and say, "O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity." Jacob found prayer not only his duty but his privilege. How pitiable are those in trouble who cannot say, from experience, "It is good for me to draw near to God!" In the perplexities, dangers, distresses of life; in the loss of relations, the failure of friends, the insufficiency of creature-helpers;—how relieving to the burdened spirit is it to say, "Therefore will I look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation, my God will hear me!"

—Imagine Jacob's situation. He was left alone. His family had been sent forward. It was now past midnight. No noise was heard. Perhaps no star was seen. He was kneeling on the ground in prayer, with his eyes closed, or raised towards heaven—when he felt the fingers of some one, seizing and grappling him—and he started up and closed with his antagonist—and endeavoured to maintain his standing against him—There wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. Wrestling is a trying and close combat, in which we can only engage personally, hand to hand; it allows not of seconds and helpers; and the aim of each is to throw the other upon the ground. Jacob's opponent came as his friend; but how could Jacob think so at first, when, instead of being lulled to sleep, he was grasped and pulled to and fro with violence! Though mercy always brings him, the Lord's coming to his people is often alarming in appearance and apprehension. He works by unlikely means, and in a way the most strange. He impoverishes in order to enrich; wounds us in order to heal; by legal despair he brings us into the hope of the gospel; and by death leads us to life eternal. Let us welcome him in what-

ever manner he may appear. Job could say, "He hath taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces"—But he could say, "Though he slay me, yet still will I trust in him."

The affair was not a vision, but a real transaction. We may however make two inquiries. First; who was this mysterious personage that strove with Jacob? Hosea calls him "the angel;" he is here called "a man"—yet the prophet says, Jacob "had power with God:" and Jacob himself says, "I have seen God face to face." What can we do here, but have recourse to "the angel of the covenant?" to him of whom Paul speaks, when he says, "being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:" to him of whom John says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." "His goings forth were of old, from everlasting." "He rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men." Thus he often assumed a human shape, as an emblem and earnest of his real incarnation in the fulness of time. Secondly; what was the nature of this wrestling? It was partly corporeal, as is undeniable from the injury he received in his thigh; and partly spiritual, as an inspired expositor tells us that "he wept, and made supplication unto the angel." These are the severest trials in which God at once exercises both the body and the mind. Yet it is no unusual thing for sickness and straits in circumstances to blend with internal conflicts—"Without," says Paul, "are fightings, and within are fears:" and, says David, "Heal

me: for my bones are vexed. My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O Lord, how long?"

It is from this exercise of Jacob's that prayer has been so frequently called wrestling with God. Formalists know nothing of the force of the image: but *they* know the meaning of it, who feel their guilt, and are pressed down by a sense of their unworthiness and imperfections; who are in earnest as to their object; and whose cry is nothing less than "Lord, save, I perish."

—We cannot determine how long the contest had lasted; but it seems to have been several hours. During all this time, though Jacob stood his ground, he got no advantage until the breaking of the day—Then the scene changed and relief was obtained. The Lord often tries the patience of his people; he delays their desires, and under the suspension, they sometimes are ready to say, Why should I wait for him any longer? Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, but when it cometh it is a tree of life; and come it will in God's own time, and will not tarry a moment beyond it. "Weeping may endure for a night; but joy cometh in the morning." What applies to any particular dispensation will apply to life itself—What is it but wrestling until the breaking of the day? But the night is far spent, and the day is at hand.

## JUNE 7.—MORNING.

“ And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh ; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh.” GEN. xxxii. 25, 26.

It is wonderful that Jacob was able to maintain the contest as he did. Never was there such an unequal match. The wrestling was between a poor worm and the Lord of all. What would have been the consequence if things had taken their natural course but Jacob’s overthrow? How then did he stand? Not from his own sufficiency, but from the condescension and kindness of his opponent, who, instead of striving against him with his great power, put strength in him, and sustained him in the encounter.

Yet the Lord would remind him of his weakness. He therefore touched and disjointed the hollow of his thigh. This was to intimate that if he should gain the victory, he was not, as he otherwise might have done, to ascribe it to himself. Good men in their attainments and successes are in danger of self-elation. It is necessary to keep them from their purpose, and to hide pride from them. Paul after his revelations had a thorn in the flesh, lest he should be exalted above measure. All our honours and comforts must have some alloy. In sailing, the ballast is as necessary as the sails, and the one must be in proportion to the other.

But does not Jacob yield now? No, he keeps on wrestling, though—in pain, and even—lamed, and therefore—obliged to grasp the closer and firmer to keep him from falling. So we are to cleave to the



Lord with purpose of heart, and to pray and not faint. Whatever discouragement we meet with, we are not in our wrestling to give up ; and when we cannot pray as we would, we must pray as we can, and not discontinue the exercise because of infirmity and imperfections.

“Let me go,” says the angel. Yet could not he, who by a touch only had disjoined Jacob’s thigh, have easily disengaged himself from his hold? And does he ask for permission to withdraw? He gives intimation of his departure, to excite the more earnest supplication for his continuance. When he was with the two disciples at Emmaus he made as though he would have gone further ; he designed to enter with them—but not without pressing ; and they constrained him, saying, Abide with us—and he went in to tarry with them. So much do they love him, and so necessary is he to his people, that a hint of his going is enough to throw them into alarm, and induce them to cry, “Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy Spirit from me.” But the motion is designed to shew the power of prayer. “The king is held in the galleries.” “I held him, and would not let him go.” “The violent take it by force.” The might of earth and hell cannot restrain God, but prayer can. Two blind men begging by the way-side, hearing that he was passing by, cried, “Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on us.” The multitude deemed them offensive interrupters, and ordered them to hold their peace. But Jesus stood still, and commanded them to be brought—The sun in nature once stood still, to enable Joshua to finish his victory ; and now a much nobler Being cannot take another step till he has paused, and heard, and

relieved the tale of distress. When God, provoked by the idolatry of the Jews at Horeb, threatened to destroy them, Moses interposed, and held back his arm; and Omnipotence itself said, "Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation." Who would not value prayer! What an efficiency does it exert! With God all things are possible—and prayer has power with God!

But the reason seems as strange as the request—Let me go, "for the day breaketh." What are the distinctions of time to him? Is it not the same to the Lord whether he is with his people by night or by day? "Darkness and light are both alike to him." First, the reason may respect the angel's unwillingness that any should be spectators of the scene. And so it tells us to avoid religious notice; and not, like the Pharisees, pray to be seen of men—"The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." When we enter our closet we are not to leave the door open. But, secondly, the reason rather refers to Jacob and his circumstances—"The morning comes, and we must separate for thy sake—Thou must pursue thy journey—thy cattle, servants, and family will require thy presence and aid." Religion is not to call us off from our relative duties, or even secular business. Every thing is beautiful in its season. We must sometimes exercise even spiritual self-denial. The privileges of the Sabbath must give place to the trials of the week. It would be more pleasing to continue an hour longer in retirement, reading the Scripture, with meditation and prayer; but the calls of the household and the claims of our callings bid us break

off—And we “must stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.”

## JUNE 7.—EVENING.

“And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob.”

GEN. xxxii. 26, 27.

JACOB now, if not before, began to know who his antagonist was. He is therefore unwilling to separate without a blessing. He looks for a blessing from one that had opposed him, struggled with him, and dis-jointed his thigh. So must we “turn to him that smiteth” us, and from the very hand that wounds seek all our relief and deliverance. “Come,” says the Church, “and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.” The blessing of the Lord maketh rich. It can do all things for us. Creatures can only wish us a blessing, but he commands and imparts it: and when he blesses none can reverse it.

Jacob uses no ceremony, but in reply to the demand, “Let me go,” abruptly says, “I will not—except thou bless me.” Was this a fit answer for a servant to his Lord and Master? When we have a promise which gives us a hold of him, we are to put him in remembrance, to plead with him, and to refuse to take any denial. There is nothing more pleasing to him than this holy violence: he loves to see us, while trusting in his faithful word, disregarding the discouragements of his providence. The woman of Canaan was sorely tried, first by his silence, then by his seeming exclusion, and then by his seeming contempt of her—but she persevered in her application,

and was more than successful. "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." And when God had threatened not to go with the people, was he offended with Moses, who said, I will not stir a step further without thy presence? No; but he yielded, and said, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

Prayer is nothing without earnestness and resolution. We ask and have not, because we ask amiss; we pour forth words, but the heart is not engaged. How can we expect that God should regard supplications with which we are unaffected ourselves? "If," says Bishop Hopkins, "the arrow of prayer is to enter heaven, we must draw it from a soul full bent." This is what Paul means by "praying with all prayer." He, the very same Being who here taught Jacob importunity in prayer, teaches us also at this moment the value and necessity of it—"Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed: I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man; and there was a widow in that city;



and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?"—"Never man spake like this man."

Jacob specifies nothing in particular, but only insists upon a blessing. His present condition however would serve to explain his immediate wish. And, therefore, with a view to this, the Lord said unto him, "What is thy name?" He could not ask to gain information; but upon the same principle that we are required to confess our sins, and to spread our wants before him in prayer; and which is not to inform a Being who is perfectly wise, but that we may be affected with our condition, and be prepared for the display of his mercy. It is we who are changed by prayer, not he: the land is not drawn to the boat, but the boat to the land—the result of the contact is the same. The Lord well knew Jacob's name, but he would know it from himself; and therefore he said "Jacob"—"The same to whom thou saidst at Beth-el, when fleeing from the face of my brother, I will keep thee in all places whither thou goest: the same to whom thou saidst, when leaving my uncle Laban, Return to thy kindred, and I will surely do thee good."

We have the same advantage in the question when we go to his mercy's door, and he asks who we are. "Lord, thou canst not be ignorant of me. I am that



swearer, that Sabbath-breaker, that despiser of all that was good, whose feet thy goodness turned into the path of peace, and whose lips it taught to shew forth thy praise. I am that backslider thy mercy reclaimed. I am that sufferer who called upon thee in the day of trouble, and was delivered—I have tried thee too much; thou hast befriended me too often, not to be acquainted with me”—

“Dost thou ask me who I am?  
Ah, my Lord, thou know’st my name!  
Yet the question gives a plea,  
And supports my suit with Thee.

Thou didst once a wretch behold,  
In rebellion blindly bold,  
Scorn thy grace, thy power defy;  
That poor rebel, Lord, was I.

“Once a sinner, near despair,  
Sought thy mercy-seat by prayer;  
Mercy heard and set him free;  
Lord, that mercy came to me.

“Many years have passed since then,  
Many changes I have seen,  
Yet have been upheld till now;  
Who could hold me up but Thou?

“Thou hast helped in every need,  
This emboldens me to plead:  
After so much mercy past,  
Canst thou let me sink at last?”

## JUNE 8.—MORNING.

“And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.” GEN. xxxii. 28, 29.

THUS he was knighted on the field. He had two names; and both of them were gained by wrestling: the one, by wrestling with his brother in the womb; the other, by wrestling with the angel at Peniel. Jacob signifies a supplanter; Israel means a prince with God—And the reason of the new name was, that he had “power with God and with men, and had prevailed.” That is, he had prevailed with God, and this was an assurance that he would prevail with man—his brother Esau, and every other foe. These go together. If God refuses to hear us, creatures will help in vain; and if God be for us, who can be against us? “When a man’s ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.” How much is it our interest to secure *his* favour who has all events at his disposal, and every heart under his control! Yet some, to engage the friendship of mortals, will offend and provoke him who can turn the wisdom of the wisest into foolishness, and the strength of the strongest into weakness.

We can hardly wonder that Jacob asked and said, “Tell me, I pray thee, thy name.” Yet it appears to have been more curious than wise. There is much of this tendency in us all; and it is a proof of our depravity, that we are equally disposed to neglect what is plain and useful, and to pry into things which we

have not seen, and which, if discovered, could be of little avail to us. This is a world of action rather than of science. The humblest Christian will know more in a moment after death than the most laborious research can acquire now in months and years. The Scripture therefore never indulges a vain curiosity that would draw us off from the one thing needful. Instead of gratifying Peter when he inquired after the destiny of John, our Saviour rebuked him: "What is that to thee; follow thou me." And when the Apostles would become students of prophecy; and asked, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" he said unto them, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." He therefore here said unto Jacob, "Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there."

This furnishes us with an opportunity to remark two things. The first regards our infirmities in prayer. We often know not what we ask. The second, God's method in answering us. He grants us while he denies. If he refuses us, he gives us something better in exchange, something better in itself, and better also for us. It is better to prepare us for his coming at any time, or in any way, than to inform us of it. It is better to make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, than to make us acquainted with the nature of it. With regard to the thorn in the flesh, the Apostle was more than satisfied with the manner in which his prayer for the removal of it was answered, when, though it continued, he had the assurance of all-sufficient grace under it, and that the Saviour's strength should be made perfect in his weakness—

“Most gladly therefore,” says he, “will I glory in my infirmity, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” He withholds abundance, but he teaches and enables us to be content with such things as we have. Let us leave ourselves to his wisdom and goodness; a wisdom that is infinite, a goodness that spared not his own Son. He would not tell Jacob his name—but he blessed him there.

## JUNE 8.—EVENING.

“And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day; because he touched the hollow of Jacob’s thigh in the sinew that shrank.”

GEN. xxxii. 30—32.

HERE we have some of the immediate consequences of this singular event. It is obvious that Jacob apprehended the personage to be Divine. Hence he wonders at his preservation. Human nature is weak, and can only bear a degree of impression. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God: and “no man,” said God himself to Moses, “can see my face and live.” Jacob therefore could not have seen him face to face, unless in the human form which he had assumed. Thus in the Gospel God is manifest in the flesh. And thus through the veil, that is to say his flesh, we are not only saved, but shall have communion with him for ever. Jacob’s humility also filled him with surprise, that he should have been not only so supported, but so signalized and dignified above all mankind. When we are in a proper frame of mind, divine favours abase as well as encourage.

That the event might not be forgotten, he calls the place by a new name, significant of the manifestation. For the same reason, after a deliverance, Samuel set up a stone, and called it Ebenezer. And Joseph and Moses gave their children names that would serve to recall their trials and their mercies. Nothing can affect us any longer than it is in our thoughts; we should therefore be careful that we forget not all his benefits. Our gratitude and our confidence depend on remembrance.

Jacob knew that the best way to glorify God is to serve him in the condition and circumstances wherein he has placed us. He therefore is not idle; but as soon as the Divine visitant had left him, he went forward, hastened to join his household, and to perform the duties of the husband, the father, the master, and to prepare for the expected interview. But as he passed over Peniel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. He could not have travelled at all unless he who had lamed him had re-jointed him. Yet, if not some pain, some weakness was left; and he limped for life. There was doubtless a contraction of the muscle or tendon, for it is said, "therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew that shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day; because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the *sinew that shrank*." Was this refusal founded in a superstitious conceit? It was rather the consequence of a divine appointment, analogous to a ceremonial and sensible dispensation of religion; or the disuse resulted from the veneration his posterity entertained for the patriarch, and their concern to memorialize this astonishing occurrence. It would be saying, Our father trusteth in thee, and thou didst



deliver him—Say not to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me, in vain.

But what a night was here! What a morning was here! With what confidence and peace would he now go forward, assured of a safe and pleasant meeting with his brother, and that goodness and mercy would follow him all the days of his life! And oh! what a relation would he have to communicate to his company as soon as he had overtaken them! They would wonder to see him halting as he approached; but they would marvel far more when he had told them of all that had happened unto him—of his wrestling! and of his success!

And how much shall we have to announce to our company who have crossed the river before us, and are waiting to receive us into everlasting habitations, when we have reached them, not in a yet unfinished and trying journey, but at home in the rest that remains for the people of God!

“There, on a green and flowery mount,  
Our weary souls shall sit;  
And with transporting joys recount  
The labours of our feet.”

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## JUNE 9.—MORNING.

“The Lord is our Judge.” ISA. xxxiii. 22.

IN ancient times, the character of a judge was united with that of a sovereign. To deliver the award of acquittal, condemnation, or pardon, was the exclusive prerogative of majesty. Even in our days, the sentence pronounced by the appointed expositors of

the law must have the fiat of the monarch before it can be fulfilled.

The word Judge is frequently in the Scripture synonymous with Ruler. But here, the Lord, as "our Judge," is distinguished from the Lord, as "our Law-giver" and "our King:" the term should therefore be taken in its more peculiar meaning, as to decisions and directions.

And this view of God should blend with every other character he sustains: not to depress hope, but to prevent presumption; not to hinder our access to God, but to sanctify us when we come nigh him; not to inspire gloom, but to exclude from us all that carelessness and levity so inconsistent with our dependence and responsibility. "If ye call on the Father, who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear."

He is our future Judge. So then, says the Scripture, every one of us must give account of himself to God: God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing. And who could bear the thought of this process, without the knowledge of a Mediator! The only way to find safety in that day, is to look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life; and to be found in him. He is our advocate with the Father; and he is the propitiation for our sins. The charges brought against us are all true; and we have nothing to offer even in our own extenuation. But we appeal to our Surety; and he answers for us. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died: yea, rather, that is risen again: who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us.

He is our Judge at present. And the Apostle speaks of it as a privilege of the Gospel dispensation, that "we are come to God, the Judge of all."

Are you perplexed about the path of duty, and yet you must move forward, while importance is attached to every step? Refer yourselves to his unerring counsel. Be influenced and encouraged by the command and the promise—"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

Is your spiritual state doubtful to your own minds? And do you dread delusion? Present the case before him: and say—"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Do you lie under the misapprehension of friends, and the reproaches of enemies? Say, with Job, "Behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high." How often did David turn from the groundless and cruel censures of men, to Him who knoweth all things! "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely, I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother; my soul is even as a weaned child." "Let my sentence come forth from thy presence: let thine eyes behold the things that are equal." Are you reviled? Revile not again. Do you suffer? Threaten not—but commit yourselves to Him that judgeth righteously. It is pleasing to have the approbation of our fellow-creatures: but there is—a higher—a juster—a more merciful tribunal. It is a light thing

to be judged of man's judgment. He that judgeth us is the Lord. "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God."

## JUNE 9.—EVENING.

"The grace that is in Christ Jesus." 2 TIM. ii. 1.

GRACE is connected with the whole of our recovery as sinners. It is all in all in every part of our salvation. Whether he is chosen, or redeemed, or justified, or converted, or sanctified, or preserved, or comforted—the believer will acknowledge, by the grace of God I am what I am—not I, but the grace of God which is with me.

But where is this grace to be found? The Apostle tells us, when he speaks of it, as the resource of Timothy, both as a minister and a Christian—Thou, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in *Christ Jesus*. As mediator, he is the principle, and the treasury of it, with regard to us.

It is in him exclusively. And we may as well think of finding snow on the bosom of the sun, or water to cool the tongue in hell, as to think of finding elsewhere than in him, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. As Pharaoh said to the famishing multitudes that cried to him for corn, "Go unto Joseph, he has all the corn;" so perishing sinners are sent to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places—in Christ. If there was only one well in the vicinity of a place, this would soon become the scene of concourse, and thithers all the inhabitants would

repair—And to him shall the gathering of the people be. If any man thirst, said he, let him come unto me and drink. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other Name given under heaven, among men, whereby they must be saved. And what Christian will refuse to join in the ascription, Of *his* fulness have *all* we received, and grace *for* grace?

It is in him all-sufficiently. For it is not in him as water in a vessel, which, though as large as the brazen sea, would, by constant drawing, be soon drawn dry; but as water in a spring, which, though always flowing, is always as full as ever. It is not in him like light in a lamp, which, however luminous, consumes while it shines, and will soon go out in darkness: but, like light in the sun, which, after shining for so many ages, is undiminished, and is as able as ever to bless the earth with his beams. There never has been, and there never will be, never can be a deficiency in him: Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

It is in him relatively. He has it for the use and advantage of his people. Is he head over all things? It is to his body, the Church. Has he power given him over all flesh? It is that he might give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him. Is he exalted at the right hand of God? It is to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins. Did he receive gifts? It was for men, and even for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them. Many trustees are faithless to their office. The rich have wealth for the poor; but it is either hoarded by avarice, or squandered by extravagance; so that the poor often share but little of it, and the design of the proprietor



is subverted by the baseness of the steward. But here there is no danger. He to whom all our welfare is entrusted, will be faithful, not as a servant, like Moses; but as a Son over his own house. His work falls in with every disposition of his heart. He so loves the recipients of his bounty, that he even died for them, and rose again. The power and authority to bless them was the joy set before him; for which he endured the cross, and despised the shame.

And it is wisely in him. Could we *see* no reason for it, we ought to believe in the propriety of the dispensation. God does all things well; and we may always infer the rectitude of any instance of his conduct even from his adopting it. And when he has *told* us that a particular course of action “became him,” it is absurd to speculate, and profane to object. But it is easy to apprehend the wisdom of God in his being pleased that *in him* should all fulness dwell. It is thus infinitely secure. Adam had all in his own hand, and soon failed, and ruined his whole race. And should we act better than he? But “this man abideth ever:” and therefore the covenant, of which *he* is the head, is everlasting, ordered in all things and *sure*. By this appointment also, there is rendered necessary a communion between Christ and Christians, equally honourable to him, and beneficial to them. Let me explain this by a simple reference. An infant when born, if left to himself, would perish; for he is entirely unequal to his own support. But he is not abandoned. Provision is made for his nourishment—Where?—In another. In whom? The one—above all others interested in him—and whose relation to him—whose anxiety on his behalf—whose love—will always yield him a welcome access to her bosom: and the mutual

action of giving and receiving will endear the babe to the mother, and the mother to the babe. It is well we cannot live independent of Christ Jesus. How much are his glory and our welfare connected with the blessed necessity of our daily and hourly intercourse with him!

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## JUNE 10.—MORNING.

"And a certain man, lame from his mother's womb, was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple."

ACTS iii. 2.

WHAT an object of distress was here! Some, if they are poor, are strong and healthful; and limbs and labour are sufficient for them. And some, if they are sickly and infirm, have wealth; or relations and friends that can afford them support. But here penury and helplessness are combined. The sufferings of some are accidental, and endured for a season only; but this man's affliction entered the world with him, and upwards of forty years he had endured the calamity.

What a vale of tears is this earth! To what a variety of evils are the human race exposed! Oh! could we see all!—could we see a little of the millionth part! What is a burial-ground? a field of battle? a hospital? every dismembered, disordered body? but a commentary upon sin as the text! For sin

"Brought death into the world, and all our woe."

Can we see such a case as this, and not be thankful for our exemption and preservation? Shall we say, He deserved to be such a cripple; but I did not? Rather, shall we not say, By the grace of God, I am what I am?

Such an instance of misery is presented to try our disposition. The eye affecteth the heart; and was designed to do it. None but a Priest or Levite will pass by on the other side. Such sights will attract the notice of the humane and the merciful, and move all his bowels of compassion, and put in requisition all his powers of relief. Job, even with regard to his prosperity, which too often makes men insensible and careless, could make this appeal: "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me: and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me; because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." "I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame."

As the only expedient of this poor wretch was begging; so, to give him an advantage, they placed him daily at the Beautiful gate of the temple, to ask alms of them that went in. This was wise. Surely he who is going to seek mercy, will be ready to shew it. Surely he who is going to pray for pardon, will not be unforgiving and implacable. "Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." What communion hath light with darkness? What fellowship can the cruel and uncharitable have with him who is love itself?

Piety without benevolence is hypocrisy. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." The tongue of men and angels, without charity, is as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. The gift of prophecy, the understanding of all mysteries, and all faith so that we could remove mountains, would be nothing without charity. How such a man, whatever be his profession, can be a partaker of divine grace, perplexed even an inspired Apostle. "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

How well he adds—"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth!"

"And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him."

## JUNE 10.—EVENING.

"He delighteth in mercy." MICAH vii. 18.

CAUSES are best discovered in their effects. We determine the nature of the spring by the quality of the streams. The tree is known by the fruits. We judge of men's principles and dispositions, by their pursuits and conduct. God himself, so to speak, submits to be examined in the same way. To ascertain what he is, we have but to consider what he does. The things the Scripture testifies concerning him, are confirmed and exemplified by the facts to which it refers us. Thus says the Church—"As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of our God." Is he called, "The God of all grace"? "The Father of mercies"?



Is it said, "He is rich in mercy"? "He delighteth in mercy"? Let us pause and reflect; and we shall find the proofs and illustrations more wonderful than the assertion itself.

We are saved by hope; hope is the first step in the return of a sinner to God; and what hath God wrought, to gain the confidence of our guilty, and therefore foreboding and misgiving minds! Here let us follow the example of the inspired John—What is it that arrests and enraptures his attention? "Herein is love." Where? In what? "Herein is love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Not that he would overlook the other doings of God; but here *he* saw most clearly that "God is love." God's soul delights in his own Son; yet he would seem to delight more in mercy: for when he met with him and us on Calvary, he said, *Thou* shalt die, and *they* shall live. It therefore pleased the Lord to bruise *him*; that by his stripes *we* might be healed; and, through his sweetsmelling sacrifice, become dearer to God than if we had never sinned. And we must here take in, not only the expensiveness of the act, but the character of the objects. It is the reasoning of another Apostle: "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." And having made the provision, so that all things are now ready: would he endeavour to awaken our attention to it—would he send forth the ministry of reconciliation to beseech us to accept it—unless he delighted in mercy?

He delights, also, not only in the exercise of mercy



to us, but *by* us. He, therefore, would not leave mercy to the operation of reason and religion only; but, as our Maker, he has rendered it a law of our being. By our very constitution, pity is an unavoidable emotion. When we see the pain and distress of a fellow-creature, the eye affecteth the heart. We involuntarily feel an uneasiness, which prompts us to succour him, even to relieve ourselves. As far, indeed, as this is implanted in us, it is a mere instinct. But who produced it there? Who made it natural? Who rendered it so difficult to be subdued and destroyed, but a Being who delighteth in mercy? Besides; though it be originally an instinct only, by cherishing it, we render it a virtue; and, by exciting and exercising it from religious motives, we turn it into a Christian grace.

And see what stress he has laid upon it in his word. How often does he enjoin it! How dreadfully has he threatened the neglect of it! And what promises has he made to the practice of it! "He shall have judgment without mercy, that shewed no mercy." "But blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." He has told us, that no clearness of knowledge, no rectitude of opinion, no fervour of zeal, no constancy of attendance on ordinances, no talking of divine things, will be a compensation for charity. "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" And hence the pre-eminence our Saviour gives it in the proceedings of the last day. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungry, and

ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." The language has been perverted; for men dream of merit, where, above all things, we need mercy. This word "for" is here not causative, but evidential—just as we may say, the spring is come, *for* the birds sing; the singing of the birds does not cause the coming of the spring, but is the effect and proof of it. But even this distinction affords the merciless no favour: for though the practice here so noticed be not the procuring of the blessedness, it is the character of the blessed. On every ground, therefore, the man who is a stranger to it, is not entitled to hope. For which reason, too, our Lord goes on to the subjects of condemnation. And who are these? Tyrants? robbers? murderers of fathers and mothers? perjured persons? No—but the slothful and the selfish—the unkind tongue—the close hand—the unfeeling heart—the unpitying eye—the foot that knew not the door of misery. "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not."

Let us, therefore, not only admire, but let us be followers of Him who delighteth in mercy. We cannot love him, unless we are concerned to please him; and we cannot please him, unless we are like-minded with him. Neither can we enjoy him. Resemblance is the foundation of our communion with

him. He only that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. "BE YE THEREFORE MERCIFUL, EVEN AS YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN IS MERCIFUL."

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## JUNE 11.—MORNING.

"It came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau, his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him Behold, here am I. And he said, Behold, now I am old, I know not the day of my death: now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; and make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die." GEN. xxvii. 1—4.

IN Isaac's blindness we see one of the frequent accompaniments of age. Age is generally an aggregate of privations, diseases, and infirmities. If, by reason of strength, we reach fourscore years, the strength then becomes labour and sorrow: labour in the preserving, and sorrow in the possession.

"Our vitals with laborious strife,  
Bear up the crazy load;  
And drag the dull remains of life  
Along the tiresome road."

A powerful reason why we should remember our Creator in the days of our youth, that we may have a resource, when the evil days come, in which we shall say, I have no pleasure. What a privilege, when exercised with loss of sight, and of hearing; with trembling of limbs, and sleepless nights; and fearful apprehensions, and failure of desire; to have God for the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever: and to hear him saying, "Even to your old

age I am he : and even to hoar hairs will I carry you : I have made, and I will bear ; even I will carry, and will deliver you !”

—The reflection of Isaac upon his mortality may be adopted by every individual, whatever his condition, or health, or age. All are ignorant of the time of their dissolution. For the human race dies at all periods, as well as in all circumstances : and we know not what a day may bring forth. But when Isaac says, “I know not the day of my death,” he means that it was near ; and that every day might be reckoned as his last. Death is not far from every one of us. But while, as the proverb says, the young may die, the old must die. And it becomes the aged to think frequently and seriously of their departure as at hand. They should prepare for it ; and regard zealously, the call of every present duty. It was the prayer of Moses, “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” It was the profession of our Lord and Saviour, “I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day ; the night cometh wherein no man can work.” It was the admonition of Solomon : “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might : for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest.”

Thus Isaac was roused into a concern to finish his work before he finished his course : “Now, therefore, take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison ; and make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat ; that my soul may bless thee before I die.” Observe, he speaks of doing it while yet alive—not afterwards. In like manner, Eli-



jah, when waiting for his ascension into heaven, said to Elisha, "Ask now what I shall do for thee, *before* I be taken up from thee," believing his intercourse with him, and his acting for him, would then be terminated. This is a solemn, and should be a useful, thought. Look at your children, your relations, your friends, your neighbours, and see in what way you can serve your generation. *Now* you can bless them by your prayers, your counsels, your example, your liberality : but all these opportunities are confined to life ; and this life is a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away ! Isaac did well in seizing the present moment to set his house in order before his death. But there are two things in which he was blamable.

First. He shews too great a regard for the indulgence of his appetite. It is mournful to see a good man, and especially an old man, instead of mortifying the deeds of the body, studying his sensual gratification, and making provision for the flesh, not to fulfil the wants but the lusts thereof. Carriages should be dragged as they are going down hill.

Secondly. He was more influenced by natural affection than a regard to the will of God. He wished to make Esau heir ; but God had expressly declared, "the elder shall serve the younger." Isaac could not have been ignorant of this. Had he forgotten it ? Or did he disregard it ? Here we see his frailty. Yet this does not render the purpose of God of none effect. His counsel shall stand, and he shall do all his pleasure. Rebekah, on the other hand was fond of Jacob—and a father has no chance against a mother, who has a favourite whom she is determined to advance ; especially such a selfish, crafty, cunning creature as



was at work here. Rebekah's aim, indeed, fell in with God's design; but this concurrence arose, not from her piety, but her partiality. Her conduct was unjustifiable and sinful: for we must not do evil that good may come. She had the divine promise on the side of her preference; and she should have rested in the Lord and waited patiently for him; and not have fretted herself in any wise to do evil. "He that believeth maketh not haste." Had she quietly committed her way unto the Lord, he would have brought it to pass, without those wretched consequences that afflicted the family. For God uses instruments without approving of them: and though he makes the folly and passions of men to praise him, he fails not to prove that it is an evil and bitter thing to forsake him, and to act without his fear in our hearts.

—How painful would it be to go on, and see a mother teaching her child to tell lies; and to see a son imposing on the blindness of an aged father! We have no notion that Rebekah was ever religious. And what proof have we that Jacob was pious at this time?—Was he not converted in his journey from Beersheba to Haran? At Bethel God met with him, and there he spake with us.

## JUNE 11.—EVENING.

"And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the Lord: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth." ZECH. xiii. 3.

As in money transactions the sterling coin gives rise to the counterfeit, so in religious concerns, reality

is followed by hypocrisy. From the beginning there were in Israel true prophets. Hence also there were false ones, wearing the attire, and assuming the manners of God's own servants; pretending to communications which they had never received; exercising and encouraging idolatry; and crying, Peace, peace, when there was no peace.

When therefore God intended mercy to the country, he engages to sweep away from the earth these emissaries of the devil; these plagues and curses of the human race. "In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and I will cause the prophets, and the unclean spirits, to pass out of the land." And so affected would the people be, and even their relations and their nearest kindred, that rising above the feelings of nature, they would themselves execute the judgment threatened: "And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the Lord; and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth."

This would be very trying to flesh and blood; but we are to love God supremely, and creatures only in subordination to him. And this is no more than Moses required: "If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither

shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: but thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people." It is no more than Levi performed in the slaughter of the idolaters in the camp at Horeb: "He said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor know his own children." How unlike this was the conduct of Eli, who, when his sons made themselves vile, restrained them not, but only gave them a gentle rebuke! And what can we think of those parents who connive at the delinquencies of their children; and, instead of opposing them with the authority and influence they possess, can rather cherish their inclinations, and accompany their steps? "He that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."

As the words from the immediately preceding and following context are allowed to refer to the evangelical dispensation, some have derived an argument from them in favour of compulsion and persecution in religion. But the Gospel sanctions nothing of this. When James and John would have called for fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans, the greatest schismatics of the age, and who had refused him a night's lodging, our Lord rebuked them, saying, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Some therefore have solved the difficulty by applying the prophecy exclusively to the conversion of the Jews; supposing that when they become Christians they will at first act according to their former usages, just as at the beginning of the Gospel they for a while strove to bring in with Christ, circumcision, and the

observance of meats and seasons. But the conjecture is improbable; and the confinement of the words to this people is groundless.

The meaning is—that effects are here put for principles—Christians should not indeed act in the same manner, but have the same zeal the pious Jews had when of old they shewed themselves on the Lord's side, and obeyed his commands, however expensive or painful the service—they should display the most determined firmness and fidelity in opposing error, and in spreading divine truth—holding nothing dear but the glory of God their Saviour—and forsaking all they have to be his disciples. It is therefore another of the many instances in the Old Testament, in which things Christian are expressed by Jewish allusions. The Prophets could only use their own language, and employ their own ideas and terms, even when speaking of another and a future dispensation. Nothing therefore can be more unwise, than to build opinions and expectations upon so weak a foundation as the names they often give to persons, places, and objects, taken from their own economy. Surely if a Jewish prophecy or promise be allowed to refer to Christian times, influences, and blessings, the phraseologies in which it is announced should be taken, not in a Jewish, but in a Christian interpretation. Admit the reverse, and we should kill people, and think we do God service from the words before us; and fetch a thousand absurdities from other passages also.



## JUNE 12.—MORNING.

"The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people." Exod. xiii. 21, 22.

THIS institution was necessary; for there was no path in the desert; and they had no maps, no pioneers, no guides. But, says God, I have not brought you out of Egypt to leave you to wander and perish in the wilderness—Behold your conductor unto the rest and the inheritance which the Lord your God giveth you. Accordingly, by this, they were to be regulated in all their journeying. As this rose, they rose. As this paused, they paused. As this turned to the right hand or to the left, they turned. It sometimes called them to leave a more endeared spot, and to stop in a less inviting scene; but they were not at liberty to cling to the one, or decline the other: the signal was instantly decisive. This pillar was obviously nothing less than a real miracle; yet how little were the observers affected by it! They sinned, and even committed idolatry, with this hovering prodigy always over them! We are prone to ascribe too much moral efficacy to such supernatural appearances. They soon became as unimpressive and uninfluential as the ordinary means of grace are with us.

It was a symbol of the Divine Presence—"The Lord was in the pillar." It was this nearness of God that insured their safety, and gave them their distinction and pre-eminence. There he was always at hand, always in view. "And," says Moses, "what nation



is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for?"

But how extensively adapted was this provision to their state and exigencies! It was both a pillar of a cloud, and a pillar of fire, to lead them in the way—The one appearance was for the day; the other for the night. Fire by day would have added to the dazzling and fervidness of a burning sky—the pillar was therefore a cloud by day, and screened them like a large umbrella from the scorching rays of the sun. Cloud by night would have added to the gloom, the darkness, and the dread of danger—the pillar was therefore a fire by night, to lick up the unwholesome damps, to warm the chilling atmosphere, and to afford them a light, by which they could see to move about in their tents, and also to travel, as they often did, after the sun was set.

If this ordinance shewed his wisdom and goodness, the continuance of the blessing evinced his patience—for, notwithstanding their unworthiness, and their provocations, and their various corrections, this pillar was not taken away from before the people till they reached the border of Jordan, and came to their journey's end!

He has a people for his Name now. They are only strangers and pilgrims on earth, bound for a better country, that is, a heavenly. This they would never reach, if they were left to themselves. But the God of Israel is with them. They have not the same sensible proof of his presence as the Jews had. Yet they have real evidence of it; and it is satisfactory to their own minds. He keeps them from falling. He accommodates himself to their conditions. He is a

very present help in trouble. He makes his goodness to pass before them. He leads them by his word, and his Spirit, and his providence. He has also said, I will *never* leave thee, nor forsake thee. Therefore they may boldly say, This God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto *death*.

“ Thus, when our first release we gain  
From Sin’s old yoke and Satan’s chain,  
We have this desert world to pass,—  
A dang’rous and a tiresome place.

“ He feeds and clothes us all the way;  
He guides our footsteps lest we stray;  
He guards us with a powerful hand;  
And brings us to the promised land.”

## JUNE 12.—EVENING.

“ That we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble  
by the comfort, wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”

, 2 COR. i. 4.

THE Apostle mentions this as the purpose for which God had comforted him and his companions in all *their* tribulation. This is very instructive and edifying. We see the *aim* of God in the favours he confers upon us. He means them not to terminate in ourselves, but to extend to others, like the streams in a vale which flow on and turn mill after mill, and refresh and fertilize meadow after meadow. We are not the proprietors, but only the stewards of the manifold grace of God: and we are to consider ourselves debtors, not only to him, but to our fellow-creatures. If we are rich in this world’s good, we are to be ready to distribute. If we are enlightened, we are to arise and shine. If we are converted, we are to strengthen

our brethren—and if we are comforted, we are to be comforters.

We also see how the Lord employs human instrumentality. He is the God of all comfort; but though he is the source, we are the mediums. He could dispense with our services, but he wisely employs them; as he thereby secures our own improvement; promotes brotherly love; unites the giver to the receiver by pity, and the receiver to the giver by gratitude; shews us that there is a connexion between all ranks and degrees in society; that there is no such thing as independence; that every man has something to receive to teach him humility, and that every man has something to impart to keep him from discouragement. "If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not of the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you."

We therefore learn also, how free our minds should be from that selfishness which is satisfied with personal advantage and enjoyment. "Look not," says the Apostle, "every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." And how well does he exemplify his own admonition! He delights in the thought that the crown of righteousness was secured for others as well as himself. He wishes that all his hearers had all his blessedness without his bonds. And we here see how he prized the consolations he had enjoyed, not because he had been comforted by

them in his sufferings, but because they would render him useful to others who are in any trouble.

Such as are "in any trouble," have peculiar claims upon us; and we are "*able* to comfort them with those comforts, wherewith we ourselves have been comforted of God," three ways. First, by excitement—They dispose and stir us up to exertion and communication. Fear unnerves: despondence makes us sluggish: and the mourner sitteth alone and keeps silence, like the stricken deer that leaves the herd. But Divine consolation enlivens, actuates, and discovers itself: and the language of the happy receiver is; "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled by my tongue." Silence would be enjoined in vain—"If these should hold their peace, the stones would cry out." "We cannot but speak the things that we have seen and heard." Secondly, by qualification. The heart teacheth the lips. They can speak, in dealing with others, more surely, more earnestly, more suitably, more wisely. Having laboured and been heavy-laden themselves, they can speak a word in season to him that is weary. Having found relief themselves, they can lead others to the same place of succour. Thirdly, by example. If nothing were said in words, the fact itself would address others; and evince what can be done, in shewing what has been done. Here is actual experience. Here are proofs that the Lord does not leave his people comfortless: that he is a very present help in trouble; that his grace is equally free and powerful, that none who seek it shall be disappointed, and none confounded that trust in it. When the Lord's people



sustain losses in their endearments, and yet say, The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; and blessed be the name of the Lord: when they receive the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: when, though walking in the valley of the shadow of death, they fear no evil, but rejoice in hope of the glory of God: how many thank God and take courage!

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## JUNE 13.—MORNING.

“The censers of these sinners against their own souls, let them make them broad plates for a covering of the altar.”

NUMB. xvi. 38.

HE had solemnly forewarned and admonished the rebels themselves before they suffered: and thus, in wrath he remembered mercy. When Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who headed the conspiracy, were buried alive; and their companions, the two hundred and fifty princes, men of honour, were burned with fire; he would make them beacons; and prevent others from coming into the same condemnation. Orders, therefore, were given to take up the censers in which they had dared to burn incense; and make of them broad plates to cover the altar of burnt offering—that they might be “a sign unto the children of Israel:” that is, a memorial to the Levites, and the comers thereunto, of the revolt of these men; and that they were punished for invading an office which God had forbidden them.

Whence we note, that the sin which is hurtful to the transgressors should be useful to the observers.

“These sinners against their own souls”! Whenever men sin, they sin *against themselves*. Society



cannot exist without laws: and laws are nothing without penalties. Connivance at the guilty would be cruelty to the innocent. In every well-ordered government crimes are punished. And will they, can they, escape in the empire of a Being, holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his works? What would you think of a magistrate who bore the sword in vain? and who was not a terror to evil doers, as well as a praise to them that do well? What would you think of him, if, when you brought before him the incendiary of your house, or the murderer of your child, he should say, This does not regard me—and smile, and say—Go in peace! We dislike the word vindictive justice—there seems something malignant in it: but substitute, in the room of it, the vindictory, or punitive, justice of God, and we contend that this is essential to the excellency of his character; and that you could not esteem, or even love him without it. What regard could you have for a being who equally respected lies and truth? cruelty and kindness? a Nero and a Howard? We readily own, that when anger and wrath are ascribed to God in the Scriptures, they do not imply any thing in him like passion in us; but only principle. But principle they do establish: and this principle is the soul of order; adherence to rectitude; determination to punish.

And we may see this in his threatenings. For his wrath is *revealed* from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men. If this Book be true, the wicked shall not stand in his sight. He hateth all workers of iniquity.

He has also confirmed and exemplified it in his conduct. Look to heaven, and see the angels sinning against themselves, and cast down to hell. See Adam

and Eve driven from the garden of Eden. See the Flood carrying away the world of the ungodly. See the inhabitants of the Plain. And Pharaoh. And the nations of Canaan. And the Jews, though so peculiarly indulged of God. Yea, he even visits the transgressions of good men with a rod: and, though he *forgives* their iniquities, he takes vengeance on their inventions. See Moses and Aaron forbidden to enter the Land of Promise: and Eli and David so awfully judged in this life. And if these things are done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? And if the righteous are recompensed in the earth, how much more the sinner and the ungodly!

It would be easy to trace the injury of sin with regard to every thing of which the welfare of the sinner is compounded. His connexions ought to be dear to him. But how does he sin against these! How does the wicked child rend the heart of his parents, and bring down their gray hairs with sorrow to the grave! How does the husband, instead of providing for those of his own house, by his vices, reduce the wife he ought to love even as himself to indigence and wretchedness, and her hapless babes along with her! What a blessing is health! But how does he sin against this! By intemperance and sensuality, he is made to possess the iniquities of his youth, which lie down with him in the dust. Envy is the rottenness of the bones. So are hatred and malice. And so are all those corroding anxieties and fears which they must feel who have no confidence in God, or hope of heaven. Reputation is desirable, as it enables us to live in the esteem of others; and valuable, as it is an instrument of usefulness: a good name, says Wisdom itself, is better than great riches.

But who regards the sinner? Who confides in him? What is his friendship? or his promise? The name of the wicked shall rot. A wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame. We must be measured, and weighed, by our souls. The mind is the standard of the man. This is the seat of happiness or misery. But he that sinneth against me, says God, wrongeth his own *soul*. Wrongs it of peace—for there is no peace to the wicked. Wrongs it of liberty and pleasure—for he is in the *gall* of bitterness, and in the *bond* of iniquity. Wrongs it of safety—for the wrath of God abideth on him: he is condemned already.

But let not these sinners suffer in vain. They are our martyrs: they die and perish for us. Their loss should be our gain; and their destruction, our salvation.

The first advantage we may derive from an observation of the sins and sufferings of others, is the confirmation of our faith. And nothing can tend more to establish our belief in the truth of the Scripture than to take its declarations and decisions, and compare them with the documents of men's lives. The Bible tells us that the way of transgressors is hard. That they proceed from evil to evil. That a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. That the companion of fools shall be destroyed. That the love of money is the root of all evil. And who has not seen this, as well as read it?

Another benefit is gratitude. When we see the wicked, we see what *we* should have been, but for preventing and distinguishing grace. Who made me to differ? Have I a heart of flesh, while they are insensible? Am I light in the Lord, while they are darkness? Am I walking in the way everlasting,

while destruction and misery is in their paths? By the grace of God, I am what I am.

The observation should also awaken and excite zeal. Surely none so much need our compassion as those who are destroying themselves for ever. We talk of doing good. What advantage can we procure a fellow-creature like that godliness which is profitable unto all things? What enemy can we rescue him from, like his lusts and vices? If we convert a sinner from the error of his way, we save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins.

It should also serve to wean us from the present world. What a bedlam it is! What a sink of corruption too! What righteous soul is not daily, hourly, vexed with the filthy conversation of the ungodly? Thus the ear, the eye, the heart, is constantly annoyed. We behold the transgressors, and are grieved. Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of way-faring men! Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away, and be at rest—with the spirits of just men made perfect—dwelling in love, and dwelling in God!

Finally. Let us fetch from it warnings. When Daniel, addressing Belshazzar, reminded him of his father's pride and destruction, he aggravates his guilt by saying, "Thou knewest all this." When the Apostle mentions "the sins and plagues that Israel knew," he says, "Now these things were our examples to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let



us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

And surely, O my soul, if the sins of others may be rendered thus profitable, I ought to be concerned to gain something from my own. Let me derive wisdom from my follies; strength from my weakness; and standing from my very falls. Let me see more of my depravity; and put on humbleness of mind; and apply to the blood of sprinkling; and never more trust in my own heart, but be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus: and be sober and vigilant; and—till I am beyond the reach of evil, pray, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."

## JUNE 13.—EVENING.

"Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?"  
MICAH ii. 7.

THEY do evil and injury to many. Thousands will curse for ever the hour they became acquainted with the Scriptures: for they derive from them only an increase of guilt and of condemnation. But this is not the effect of design or of natural tendency in them; for the Bible is intended and adapted to do us good only; but it is the accidental result of depravity; and therefore it is confined to those who pervert it, abuse it, neglect it; and thus turn the blessing into a curse. But his words do good to him that walketh uprightly.



They do good indeed to others, and are the means of the conversion of sinners. But the prophet is not speaking of what the Scriptures do in bringing us into a religious state, but of the benefit they render us when we are in it. Our Saviour, in the parable of the sower, does not explain *how* the ground is *made* good—this he has done in other places: but of the effect of the seed in bringing forth thirty, sixty, or a hundred fold, when falling where it is *already* good—in distinction from its unprofitableness when uniting with the way-side, and the stony and thorny soil. The Author of the origin of the rain is another question; but the Apostle is speaking only of its influence according to the subject imbibing it, when he says that, coming upon the garden, it bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, and receives a blessing from God: but in other places it calls forth weeds, and thorns, and briers, which are nigh unto cursing, and whose end is to be burned. The word of God must operate according to the principles and dispositions it finds in us. If it be food, it is nothing to the dead, but to the living only. It is milk for babes, and strong meat for men. If it be a rule, the benefit is only to them that walk by it. And we are never in so suitable a state to be benefited by it as when conscience is awake, and we are sincerely desirous of knowing the will of God, and are resolved to follow it, whatever difficulties may lie in the way. Hence says James, “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls.” And thus Peter also: “Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings, as new-born babes, desire the sin-

cere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby ; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”

For we are not to expect that his words will do us good mechanically, that is, without our consciousness or activity ; or that they will act in us as physical causes operate in the body, where the concoction of the food, and the circulation of the fluids go on, when we are asleep, as well as when we are awake, being independent of our volitions and thoughts. The Scriptures can only affect us morally, in a way of motive, in the exercises of the mind, and in the use of the means which God has appointed. This does not supersede Divine influence, but is the way in which it works, and in which alone we are *authorized* to look for it. If God's words are to do us good, we must read them—we must hear them—we must believe them—we must understand them—we must reflect upon them—we must speak of them—we must pray over them. But what is the benefit they will then do us ? It would be endless to describe it. They are profitable unto all things.

They will do us good in a way of information. For the soul to be without knowledge is not good. But there is no knowledge like that which is derived from the Scriptures. It is so clear, so full, so important, so blessed—it giveth life to them that have it. What an advantage, in every duty, in every perplexity, to be able to go to these lively oracles, to learn what God the Lord has to say concerning us ; and to hear a voice saying, This is the way, walk ye in it !

They will do us good in a way of excitement. We often grow dull and formal in religion. We have a name that we live, but are dead ; or the things that remain are ready to die. But when our souls cleave

unto the dust, he quickens us according to his word ; and the effect endears it, and enables us to remember it: "I will never forget thy precepts ; for with them thou hast quickened me."

They will do us good in a way of rebuke. If they deal truly with us—and *they* will never flatter ; they will—they must frequently reprove us. And if we are concerned for our real welfare, we shall not esteem them our enemy because they tell us the truth. We shall cordially say, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend ;" and falling in with their wholesome severity, we shall fall upon our knees and pray, "Search me, O God, and know my heart ; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." How improper is it to limit the benefit of the word to encouragement ; and to suppose that we have never a *good* opportunity, as the phrase is, when we attend upon it, unless it comforts us ! What a blessing is it to be humbled, to be emptied of self, to see more of our own weakness and vileness, and to cry mightily at the foot of the cross, "God be merciful to me a sinner !"

Not that we undervalue comfort. The joy of the Lord is our strength : and these words he has spoken unto us, that his joy may be in us, and that our joy may be full. They therefore do us good, by inspiring us with everlasting consolation and good hope through grace. They relieve the wearied, oppressed with a sense of grief and unworthiness, by leading them to the Lamb of God, and giving them access with confidence, by the faith of him. They tell us what we are to do with trouble ; and they tell us what trouble is to do for us. Ah ! says the bereaved

and desolate, unless thy law had been my delight, I should have perished in mine affliction. Ah! says the dying, I will fear no evil; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

We talk of benefactors! What good has the Bible done! What millions has it blessed! And in what countless instances has it blessed each of them! How much do I owe it! Bless the Lord, O my soul. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen.

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## JUNE 14.—MORNING.

“Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?” JOHN xiv. 9.

HE had been with Philip and his fellow disciples corporeally; for the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among them, and they beheld his glory. But his bodily presence was confined to Judæa, and few knew him, after the flesh. And soon he was known so no more; for he was received up into heaven. But it is remarkable, that while on earth, he evinced that his efficiency was not dependent on his bodily presence: for he performed cures at a distance, as we see in the case of the nobleman's son, and the centurion's servant, who were healed by no application, but simply by his volition; as if to encourage the belief, that when removed hence, he could still operate in our world.

And, if his word is to be relied upon, he is with his people now. What was his promise to his ministers? to his churches? to individuals? “Lo! I am



with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” “If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” Therefore, he has either given promises which he is unable to fulfil; or, though now in heaven, he is with his disciples on earth—with them specially, graciously, spiritually. Effects prove the existence of the cause. The operation of the workman shews his presence. And that “*his Name* is near, his wondrous works declare.” He has done enough *in* the Christian, to demonstrate that he is *with* him—and he hath said, I will never *leave* thee, nor *forsake* thee.

Yet he says to Philip—“Hast thou not known me?” Philip was not entirely ignorant of him. But he knew him not sufficiently: he knew him not comparatively; he knew him not, considering how he might have known him. And is not this the case with us? Some have very little knowledge of any kind. They never guide even the common affairs of this life with discretion. They seem incapable of improvement. Even suffering does not teach them wisdom. “Experience,” says Franklin, “is a dear school; yet fools will learn in no other.” And *they* do not learn even in this. Yet the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. We live in a land of vision; we have Sabbaths, and Bibles, and religious ordinances and teachers. Yet as to knowledge of the peculiar truths of the Gospel, and the reality of Christian experience, numbers are as ignorant as heathens: “The light shineth in darkness, but the darkness comprehendeth it not.” Must



we go on? What do many Christians, real Christians, who have long had the great Teacher with them—what do even they know?—What do they know of their own interest in him? Are they not yet unable to determine what their spiritual condition is, and to say with Thomas, *My Lord and my God*?—How little do they know of his salvation! How little of the glories of his person! How little of the nature of his dispensations towards them: so that they—are confounded with the fresh discoveries they make of the evils of their own hearts—perplexed with their afflictions—desponding if difficulties multiply, and they see no means or way of escape—and ready to conclude that he has shut out their prayers, because he does not immediately and sensibly answer them: and all this from their knowing so little of the *manner* in which he deals with his people.

Yet the defectiveness of their knowledge is very censurable, especially after *long* intimacy with him. Hence the Apostle reproaches the Hebrews; “When for the time ye ought to have been teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God.” Hence our Lord said to his disciples on another occasion; “Are ye also yet without understanding?” And here again he says: “Have I been *so long* time with you, and *yet* hast thou not known me, Philip?” He had scarcely been three years with them then; and he had very gradually developed himself, and kept back many things for a future communication. Yet it was a long period, considering its importance and privileges. And always having access to him, with their inquiries;—and hearing his discourses; and witnessing all his conduct;—they ought to have gained much more than

they did. But they were slow of heart, and made very little progress, as we see by their various mistakes and embarrassments. Yet what right have *we* to cast a stone at them? How few, how poor, how wretched, have been our attainments!—And yet he has been much longer with many of us—ten—twenty—forty years—years, too, abounding with every assistance. Four things ought to make us blush at the thought of this.

First. The necessity and value of the knowledge we have made so little proficiency in. How much depends upon it: our usefulness—our preservation from error—our peace, and comfort—and our progress in the divine life! For though we may grow in knowledge without growing in grace, we cannot grow in grace without growing in knowledge. Religion does not act upon us mechanically, but morally; that is, through the influence of just views and motives.

Secondly. Some have made far greater advancement in much less time, and with very inferior advantages. They set out long after us; but they soon passed us on the road. They have had very little pious intercourse, and have seldom heard a Gospel sermon. Yet, when we converse with them; and observe them in the relations—duties—and trials of life; how much below them must we feel ourselves to be!

Thirdly. Our obligations and responsibility rise with our means and opportunities. What an advantage are pious relations! What a privilege is a Gospel ministry! What a precious talent is time! Where is conscience while we look at our slender improve-

ment of all these?—Where much is given, much will be required.

Lastly. Our unprofitableness is the subject of Divine disappointment and complaint. “What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?” The thought of displeasing and dishonouring him is nothing to some people. But shall *we* provoke, and grieve, his holy Spirit? Can we who love him and know what he has done for us—can *we* be insensible to the Saviour’s decision—“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit: so shall ye be my disciples”?

What remains—but that we admire and adore the patience of Him who still bears with us, though we have so often constrained him to ask, “How long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?”—And let us search and try our ways, and turn again unto the Lord. Let us guard against indecision and sloth. Let us be diligent in the use of all the means of religious improvement. Let us not cease to pray, that we may be “filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. That we may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

“Then shall we know *if* we follow on to know the Lord. His going forth is prepared as the morning. And he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.”

JUNE 14.—EVENING.

“Adam, where art thou?” GEN. iii. 9.

THE question regards not so much the place as the state in which Adam now was. And it is not to be considered as indicating any proof of ignorance; for who can hide himself from the view of Omniscience? But it implies several things the result of knowledge.

It is the expression of surprise—“Adam, where art thou?” As if he had said, “Before, when I came thou wert ready to meet me; and my presence was thy delight. What in so short a space of time has produced this change? What have I done to cause this alienation and flight from me?” If this seems an unbecoming representation of God, let it be remembered that he has himself furnished it—“Be astonished, ye heavens, at this.” “What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?” He cannot indeed be imposed upon, but he has a *right* to complain; and speaks according to the equity of the case. “Adam, where art thou?”

It is the language of upbraiding. “Is this the return thou hast made for all the favours with which I have indulged thee? Is this the use thou hast made of the noble faculties with which I have endowed and ennobled thee? Is this thy kindness to thy friend? Is this acting the part of a faithful steward towards his proprietor? of a dutiful child towards a good father? of an obedient servant towards the best of masters? Did I envy thy welfare, or wish to

aoridge thy happiness? I only forbad thee one tree in all the garden; and even this was forbidden for thy trial, and with a view to thy honour and reward."

It is the lamentation of pity. He is not only the just God, but the Saviour: he is not only righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works, but full of compassion, and slow to anger. As, when our Lord, condemned by the Pharisees for healing the withered arm on the Sabbath-day, looked round about upon his audience "with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts;" and as, when he looked upon the backsliding Peter, and dissolved him into godly sorrow, there was not only surprise and upbraiding in the glance, but mercy and readiness to forgive: so here, in the voice that addressed Adam, there was not only alarm, but tenderness; not only abhorrence of the crime, but pity for the criminal—"Poor Adam, what hast thou done? What misery hast thou brought upon thyself? I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. How shall I give thee up? Adam, *where* art thou?"

But the question admits of a universal application; and we should bring it home to ourselves; and for three reasons. First, because of the relation there is between Adam and ourselves. There is no other creature with whom we are so intimately and influentially connected. He was the father and the natural head, and he was the representative and the federal head of the whole human race. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." "By one man's offence death reigned by one." "In Adam all die."—Secondly, because by personal transgression we bring ourselves into the same state. All sin is the



same in its nature and tendency. We sin, and expose ourselves to danger—Fear treads on the heels of guilt—Dread produces aversion—And we try to secure ourselves, instead of repairing to his feet, and imploring mercy. In one respect we are worse than Adam. He, after the first act of iniquity, could not look God in the face: while we go on still in our trespasses; often daringly enter his presence and stand before him in his worship; and seem to defy rather than endeavour to elude him—So men are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin!—Thirdly, because the inquiry may lead us to examine our state, and apprehend our doom. And what a blessing is it to be apprized of our danger while it is in our power to escape! Would not a man have reason to be thankful, if a person should break his slumber, however pleasing, while sleeping in a house just ready to bury him in the ruins? Conviction of sin may be painful; but it is salutary, it is necessary. Without a consciousness of the disease, a remedy will neither be valued nor applied—"They that be whole need not the physician, but they that are sick." It was a blessed cry in the jailer, when he exclaimed, "What must I do to be saved?" It secured the direction and the promise; "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house."

Nothing hinders our full relief as sinners by the Gospel but our ignorant pride in refusing to submit ourselves to the righteousness which is of God. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word."

## JUNE 15.—MORNING.

“When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.” DEUT. xxxii. 8.

THIS is an important and interesting communication. It supplies us with two facts.

First. That *God* originally divided the nations their inheritance. When after the Deluge he gave the new earth to the children of men, he did not throw it in among them, so to speak, for a kind of scramble, that each might seize what he could: but he assigned them their several portions, that the discontented might not invade the peaceful, nor the mighty prey upon the weak. God permits what he does not approve: but nothing can be more contrary to his design and pleasure than for powerful states to invade and incorporate little ones. And the crime generally punishes itself. Such unjust and forced accessions add nothing to the safety, strength, or happiness, of the acquirers; but become sources of uneasiness, corruption, and revolt—so difficult is it to suppress old attachments, and patriotic instincts that are almost equal to the force of Nature. Paul justifies the sentiment of Moses: “He hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us.”

Secondly. In the arrangement of the limits and conditions of mankind, he had an especial reference to the future commonwealth of Israel. For they were

by far the most important detachment of the human race. They were the Lord's portion, and the lot of his inheritance. They were the depositaries of revealed religion: the heirs of the righteousness which is by faith. To them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenant, and the giving of the Law, and the service of God, and the promises: theirs were the fathers; and of them as concerning the flesh, Christ came. We cannot trace this fact perfectly, for want of more materials; and we know not all the purposes of God in making and keeping the Jews a peculiar body—otherwise we should clearly see how all the dispensations of God corresponded to their privileged destination.

One thing is to be observed. They were not intended to *engross* the Divine favour, but to be the mediums and diffusers of it. They were not only to be blessed, but to be blessings. Hence their being placed in the midst of the earth, that from them knowledge might be derived, and proselytes to revealed religion might be made; and that, in the fulness of time, out of Zion might go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; and that the Great Supper, as our Lord calls it, and which was designed for the whole family of Adam, might be spread in the midst of the earth, and be accessible to all.

While we here see that there is nothing like chance in the government of the world, there is what may be called a peculiar providence in particular instances. And here we cannot help thinking of our own country. No country on earth bears such a comparison with Judæa, in privilege and design, as this favoured land. Its appropriation and appointment will account for its preservation, and emerging from difficulties which

seemed likely to swallow it up. And when we consider what it is, and what it more than promises to be, we can find reason for its insular situation; its government, laws, and commerce; its talent and learning, and influence, and dominion. We are a sinful people: but as "the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it; so, says God, will I do, for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all." We cannot approve of every thing we have done, especially in the West and East Indies: but we cannot be ignorant that God is overruling it for good; and has ends in view far beyond slaveholders, and mercantile companies, and heroes, and statesmen. We have fought and we have conquered: but the Negro is instructed; and the captive is made free indeed; and openings are made and occupied for the spread of the Gospel.

The economies of Heaven on earth have always been regulated by one end—the cause of the Messiah: and could we view things as God does, we should perceive how all the revolutions of the world; the changes of empire; the successes or defeats of haughty worms; have affected this cause, immediately or remotely in a way—of achievement or preparation—of purification or increase—of solidity or diffusion; and that all things are going on, not only consistently with it, but conducively to it. For, says the Ruler over all, "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear."

And, oh! Christian, there is a special providence over thee. The hairs of thy head are all numbered. One thing regulates all that befalls thee: all the dark,



as well as the clear; all the painful, as well as the cheerful—thy spiritual—thy everlasting welfare: “for we know that all things work together for good to them that love God; to them that are the called according to his purpose.”

## JUNE 15.—EVENING.

“Ye are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.” 1 PET. ii. 25.

FOR they *were* as sheep going astray—This was their state by nature. But *now* they are in a state of grace. And two things are observed with regard to it. First, they enter it by a return—Ye are *returned*. Grace never leaves us as it finds us. It makes us the subjects of a change—not a change from one class of opinions to another, or from one denomination to another—not a change from mere gross vices to moral duties; but a change of mind, of heart, and of life; and which embodies the various representations given of it in the Scriptures. It is a turning from darkness to light, and the power of Satan unto God. It is the renewing of the Holy Ghost. It is a new birth, a new creation. The work, though always essentially the same, differs in various individuals. The means also by which it is produced are not the same in all instances. In general, it is accomplished by the preaching of the word; but sometimes it is effected by reading the Scriptures, by a good book, by pious conversation, by affliction—“Lo! all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living.”

But let us never suppose that the return is owing



to himself. It is supposed the Apostle designed to express this by the form of his expression. It is in the passive voice—not ye—returned, but ye *are* returned—that is, as if he had said, ye have been caused to return. We would not, however, found a doctrine of such importance on a mere grammaticism. The truth is expressly asserted. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.” “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

Secondly, this return brings them to Christ—“Ye are returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.” He is the personage spoken of; and how well does he deserve the titles!—But observe, the grand thing in religion is our being brought to *Christ*. Therefore he himself said, “Come unto *me*.” “Every man therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto *me*.” As it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, “to him,” it is said, “shall men come.” “To him shall the gathering of the people be.” It is with him we have to do immediately in the concerns of the soul. We want a mediator between God and us; but we want no mediator between Christ and us—To him we must come as we are. “In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.”

Christians! what gratitude becomes you! Ye were darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord. Ye were in bondage, but are now in the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Ye were destitute of all spiritual good,

but are now blessed with all spiritual blessings. How should your obligation to such infinite goodness be discharged? By a few languid emotions? or formal acknowledgments? A soul redeemed demands a life of praise.

Christians? what confidence, what joy becomes you? All hail, ye highly favoured of the Lord!—"Ye *were* as sheep going astray, but are *now* returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of souls"—You are returned unto One who loved you from eternity, and always bore you in his heart—You are returned to one who saved you from a thousand dangers, and preserved you by his providence till he called you by his grace—You are returned to one whose power is almighty, whose heart is made of tenderness, who never leaves you, never slumbers nor sleeps—You are returned to one who, lest any hurt you, keeps you night and day, and has said, My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand—You are returned to one who will feed his flock *like* a shepherd; who will gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young—who will make you to lie down in green pastures, and feed you beside the still waters, and restore your souls, and lead you in the paths of righteousness for his Name's sake. Yea, though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you need fear no evil; for he will be with you, his rod and his staff will comfort you. And not only so, but he will bring you into Immanuel's land and the heavenly places, where the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed you, and lead you to living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes.

## JUNE 16.—MORNING.

“Thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes.” Ps. xxvi. 3.

AND it will be well to follow David; and to keep the lovingkindness of God before *our* eyes also. This should be done four ways.

First. As a subject of contemplation. The mind will be active; and it is our wisdom to regulate and sanctify our thoughts. Isaac went out into the field at eventide to meditate; and we may infer the nature of his reflections from his character. David said, My meditation of him shall be sweet. How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! People complain of the difficulty they feel in fixing their minds: but the duty would become easier by use—and surely they never can be at a loss for a theme. Let them take his lovingkindness, and set it before their eyes. Let them observe it as it appears in the promises of his word; in the history of his Church; in their own experience. Let them pass from the instances of his lovingkindness to the qualities of it. Let them dwell upon its earliness; and fulness; and extensiveness; and seasonableness; and constancy—“Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord.”

Secondly. As the source of encouragement. How often shall we need this! We shall feel our want of it under a sense of our guilt, and unworthiness, and continued imperfections; and nothing short of the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us by Christ Jesus, will be able to relieve us. But this *will* relieve us; and *effectually* succour us. It will

give us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace; and boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. And it will do all this without reconciling us to our sins, or even our infirmities—yea, it will make us lament our deficiencies the more, and grieve that we serve him so little, who loves us so much. We shall want it in our afflictions. And who can hope to escape these in a vale of tears? Now nothing is so desirable in our sufferings as to see, not only the *hand* but the *kindness* of God in them. For often they look like the effects of his wrath, and we tremble under them, and cry, “Do not condemn me. I could bear these trials if I thought they were only the strokes of a Father’s rod, and knew they were sent in love.” And they *are* sent in love. They are only the strokes of a Father’s rod, laid hold of with reluctance and laid aside with pleasure.

Thirdly. As an excitement to praise. It is afflicting to think how little the lovingkindness of God is acknowledged by those who are constantly partaking of it. How lamentable, says Leighton, is it, that a world so full of God’s mercy should be so empty of his glory! Oh! says David, again and again, Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! Were there not ten lepers cleansed? But where are the nine? Did even Hezekiah render according to the benefits done him? And are we better than they? And whence is it that we feel so little the obligations we are under to the God of our mercies? Because the mercies of God are so little remarked and remembered by us. Nothing can impress us when it is out of our minds and thoughts. Therefore, says David, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his



benefits." At the moment when God appears for us, we are sensible of his goodness, and speak well of his Name: but like the Jews, we soon forget his works, and the wonders which he has shewn us. We inscribe our afflictions upon a rock, and the characters remain: we write our mercies on the sand of the seashore, and the first wave of trouble washes them out.

Lastly. We should keep his lovingkindness before our eyes as an example for imitation. The Scripture calls upon us to be followers of God as dear children. And in what are we to resemble him? His moral, and not his natural perfections. We may wish to resemble Him in power and independence; and to be as gods knowing good and evil. But we are to be concerned to reverence him, not as the greatest, but the best of beings—to be faithful as he is faithful—to be holy as he is holy—to be patient, and forgiving, and kind, like himself. "I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Be ye therefore merciful, even as your Father which is in heaven is merciful.

You would do well to keep in view some of your fellow-creatures, who feel that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Think of a Howard, a Thornton, a Reynolds. But in *Him* the fatherless findeth mercy. God is love. We cannot equal him. But it is our happiness to resemble. He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. "Put on



therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering: forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And, above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

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## JUNE 16.—EVENING.

"I was wounded in the house of my friends." ZECH. xiii. 6.

THIS seems literally the complaint of a false prophet, who had been punished and removed from his office. We cannot easily perceive the relation between the treatment of such a man and the suffering of the Saviour. And yet the words both immediately preceding and following can scarcely leave a doubt of a reference to him.

And of him the complaint is true in every respect. True with regard to the treatment he met with from the Jews. He came to his own, and his own received him not; but vilified and scourged him; crowned him with thorns; and nailed him to the tree. True with regard to his treatment from his own Apostles. One of them betrayed him with a kiss; another denied him with oaths and cursing; and all forsook him and fled—He looked for some to take pity and there was none, and for comforter but he found none. True with regard to the professors of his religion in all ages. The world is the house of his enemies. There his day is profaned, his laws transgressed, his name blasphemed, his truth denied, and his followers condemned—There we look for nothing else; and though

we censure and condemn, we feel no surprise. But the Church is the house of his friends; so he calls them; and it is their honour and privilege to be such—yet here, even here, where he only reckons upon behaviour becoming the relation, he is often dishonoured and injured—"This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation."

But what is the conduct by which he is aggrieved? It is negligent conduct—when they disregard the means of grace and the institutions of religion. These he has established. He has commanded us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. He has promised to come unto us and bless us in all places where his Name is recorded. In what then can we try him more than by shewing how little we regard his authority, or value his presence? and by suffering trifles to keep us from our engagements with *him* that would not detain us from an appointment with any of our fellow-creatures? It is selfish conduct—when we cannot deny ourselves, or make any sacrifices for the relief of his members, and the support and spread of his cause; though we are often praying that his kingdom may come, and that his word may have free course and be glorified. It is distrustful conduct. Nothing hurts us more than a want of confidence, especially after long intimacy and tried fidelity. He is truth itself; and loves to see us taking him at his word, and depending upon his promises as firmer than heaven and earth. Nothing in a friend atones for distance and concealment, and our learning things not by communication but by event. The Lord loves to be consulted; and when we venture to act without taking counsel of him, and bring ourselves into difficulties and embarrassments, he may

well chide us—"You should have committed your way unto me." Hast thou not procured this unto thyself? It is timid conduct—when, instead of going forth to him without the camp, we are ashamed of him and of his words; when, instead of being bold as a lion, we shrink back or turn aside in the path of duty, at every intimation of danger. The fear of man bringeth a snare. But perfect love casteth out fear. It is gloomy conduct—when we walk mournfully before the Lord, and hang down our heads like a bulrush, and sink in the day of adversity. We then depreciate and misrepresent his religion, and lead people to think it is a course of cheerlessness and melancholy. Whereas, by learning in whatsoever state we are therewith to be content; and in every thing giving thanks; and rejoicing evermore; we speak well of his Name, we recommend his service, we invite others to seek him with us. It is unholy conduct—when, instead of putting to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour, and constraining others to glorify God by our good works which they behold; we cause, by our miscarriages and falls, the way of truth to be evil spoken of, and the adversaries of the Lord to blaspheme. Woe to the world because of offences! They harden the wicked; scandalize the weak; distress the strong; weaken the hands of his servants; and vex and grieve his Holy Spirit. And though he will not cast away his people whom he foreknew, their backslidings shall reprove them, and he will make them know that it is not only an evil but a bitter thing to forsake him. This is the law of the house: "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not

my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips." Thus, because Moses and Aaron did not sanctify him at the rock, he would not suffer them to go over Jordan. And though he put away David's sin in the guilt of it, yet the effects of it attended him through life. And if we turn from his history to his experience, in the fifty-first Psalm, we shall see, that, in addition to distressing events without, he had anguish enough within to induce him ever after to pray, Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.

But while fear makes us prayerful, let ingenuousness make us penitent. Let us bewail the ingratitude and vileness of our conduct towards such a benefactor. Let us hear him say—Did not I suffer enough while on earth? Must I now not only be crucified afresh and put to an open shame among others; but be wounded in the house of my friends? Who when rich for thy sake became poor? By whose blood wast thou redeemed? In whose righteousness art thou accepted? What have I not done for thee? And what have I not engaged to do? Have I not promised to guide thee in all thy ways? To keep thee in all thy dangers? To supply all thy wants? To make all things work together for thy good? And to receive thee at death to myself, that where I am thou mayest be also?—"IS THIS THY KINDNESS TO THY FRIEND?"



## JUNE 17.—MORNING.

“The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen.” LAM. iv. 20.

SOME commentators suppose that these words are intended to apply to the Saviour—We see no ground for this conclusion. Others imagine that there may be a reference to him under the case of Zedekiah. However this may be, the passage may be used—not to prove any doctrine, but to remind us of several things pertaining to the Lord Jesus, and fully established in the Scriptures of Truth—

Such as his office—“The anointed of the Lord;” the very meaning of the word Messiah in the Old Testament, and of Christ in the New. Prophets, priests, and kings, were anointed at their consecration. He was all these. And therefore he is said to be anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. Here the term imports majesty; and he is the King of glory; the King of Saints; the King of nations—“With my holy oil have I anointed him.”

Such is the estimation in which he is holden by his subjects—“The breath of our nostrils.” He is not so regarded by others. The world knew him not. The Jews received him not. He is now, as to the multitude, despised and rejected of men. This was the case once with his own people. They acknowledge it; and look back with shame and sorrow upon a period—and with some of them it was a long period, during which he had no form or comeliness, nor any beauty that they should desire him. But he has been revealed in them. And now he appears fairer than the children of men, and altogether lovely. Faith



makes him precious. He is their righteousness and strength; their glory and joy; all their salvation and all their desire. We may be excessive in our attachment to a creature; but we can never think too highly of him. It was idolatry in these Jews to call their prince the breath of their nostrils; but Jesus is really and absolutely so to us. How dear! How important! How indispensable!

—Such is their expectation from him—"Of whom we said, under his shadow we shall live among the heathen." The Israelites were literally among the heathen, surrounded as they were with the Gentile nations. This was also the case with the first Christians. Yea, they were not only encompassed by them, but intermixed with them. In one house dwelt an idolater; in the next, a worshipper of God. A Pagan and a Christian laboured together in the same field, or the same manufactory. We should not undervalue the outward advantages of Christianity. How much more privileged are we, than our missionary brethren!—they live under his shadow—but it is among the heathen! While we have our Sabbaths, and temples, and preachers, and our fellow Christians, with whom we take sweet counsel together. Though there are no heathens among us, nominally, and as to dispensation, yet there are some who know nothing doctrinally; and many who know nothing spiritually; many who are without God in the world, and who hate and oppose, as far as they are allowed, the religion we experience. And how often is a righteous soul vexed with the filthy conversation of the ungodly, and constrained to sigh, "Woe is me, that I dwell in Mesech!"—But whatever be the disadvantages of our condition, there is a shadow and *his* shadow—under which we

can *live*! A shadow from the heat—not the shadow of a summer-cloud only; but of a great rock in a weary land; the shadow of a tree yielding, not only shade, but fruit; according to the acknowledgement of the Church—"I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." So it is said, "They that dwell under his shadow shall return: they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon." His shadow means protection, and all the blessings of his empire. The reign of some rulers is like the shadow of a vulture over the bird of prey; or as a hurricane over the flooded meadow, and the stripped forest. But let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

—Such is his apprehension and suffering—"He was taken in their pits." They watched him, and persecuted him, through life. At length he was betrayed into the hands of his enemies; and they insulted him, and crucified him, and laid him in the grave—Then his disciples said, "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel"—"The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen."

—But here correspondence becomes contrast. No type, no image, no illustration can do justice to him; and when examined, it will always be found to teach more by unlikeness, than by conformity. Zedekiah's subjects had their hopes disappointed and destroyed *by his* arrest; and when carried away, and imprisoned at Babylon, he could no longer defend or comfort them. But Jesus is our hope, notwithstanding his

apprehension and death—yea, and in consequence of it. He is made perfect through sufferings. And thus it is that he brings many sons unto glory. When he fell into the hands of his enemies, they thought they had completely succeeded. But their triumph was short. He fell; but in dying he overcame. And then was the judgment of this world, and then was the prince of this world cast out. We therefore glory in his Cross; *there* he becomes the author of eternal salvation. He died for us, and rose again; and because he lives we shall live also.

—Let us, then, *live* under his shadow: securely live: nobly live: joyfully live—not only having life, but having it more abundantly.

—And let us invite others to come, and share with us. “In that day shall ye call every man his neighbour, under the vine, and under the fig tree.”

## JUNE 17.—EVENING.

“And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran.”  
GEN. xxviii. 10.

ESAU's anger was fierce against Jacob for having deprived him of his father's blessing. His mother therefore advised him to flee to her brother Laban, and tarry with him a few days; “until,” said she, “thy brother's fury turn away, and he forget that which thou hast done to him;” clearly intimating that his concern would be of short duration, and that levity would soon extinguish resentment. Whence we may learn that carnal men, for such this profane person strikingly represents, can easily resign what a believer would not part with for a thousand worlds.—The blessing of his heavenly Father.

Dismissed by Isaac with admonition and prayer, "Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran." Though the simplicity and manners of the age rendered travelling less formidable than it appears to persons unaccustomed to it now, yet the journey must have been very trying to Jacob. The distance was great—he was parting with his parents—he was young—he had been tenderly brought up, having been the favourite of Rebekah—he had no beast to carry him—he had no servant to attend him—no guide to direct him—no guard to protect him—no companion to cheer him by communion. Thus he goes forward solitary and pensive, ruminating upon his sad condition, and conflicting with those apprehensions which always attend untried and uncertain events.

And "he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set." The road he travelled, if it might be called a road, was in many places savage and dreary; uninhabited of men, and infested with wild beasts, which would now be roving abroad: "Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens." Jacob's safety therefore prevents his going onward till the morning. Here therefore he must repose. But what will he do for lodgings? There is no habitation near him. And for want of materials he cannot pitch a tent. He is therefore obliged to expose his body to the moist air of the night: the sky is his tester; the darkness, his curtains; the earth, his bed:



“and he took the stones of that place, and put them for his pillow, and lay down in that place to sleep.”

And *could* he sleep in such a condition? The sleep of a labouring man is sweet; and he does not require delicate accommodations. But this was not all. He hereby shewed his inward serenity and confidence. The wicked flee when no man pursueth; but the righteous is bold as a lion. The Lord keeps in perfect peace the mind that is stayed upon him. David, when the rebellion of his son raged around him, said, “I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.” And Peter, the night before his intended execution, was sleeping so soundly between the soldiers, that the angel, to awake him, was compelled to strike him. How happy in trouble, and how safe in jeopardy, are those who have an all-sufficient Jehovah to watch over them, and keep them by day and by night!

There cannot be a better evidence of our belonging to God than the resignation of ourselves to him in a way of providence. “How may I know I do so?” We answer, by acquiescing in his dispensations, and accommodating yourselves to events. We find no murmuring in Jacob, notwithstanding the trying circumstances he was in. The hope of an agreeable scene for the future reconciled him to his hard condition for the present. So should it be with us while we are travelling, not to Haran, but to heaven; not to the house of a cruel Laban, but to the dwelling of a gracious Saviour. He will give us every thing necessary for our journey, and a welcome and blessed reception at the end of it. It becomes us therefore



in patience to possess our souls, and to go on our way rejoicing.

Jacob sleeps, but his heart waketh. It would be unwarrantable to conclude that Jacob had held no intercourse with God during his journey. We have every reason to suppose that what he had been reflecting upon during the day continued to occupy and impress his thoughts at night; and therefore that God took advantage of it in dealing with him. And though there was something extraordinary in the affair before us, yet we are persuaded that if we were more with God when we are awake, we should be more with God when we are asleep—for “a dream cometh through the multitude of business.”

Jacob dreamed. The generality of dreams are frivolous and vain; and it is strange that many good people should lay such stress upon them as they often do. But the circumstances of Jacob's dream are worthy our attention; because they have the signature of God upon them.

Observe what was

*Seen.* “Behold a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven.” Was this designed to intimate the providence of God as observing all things, and keeping up a perpetual correspondence between heaven and earth? Rather read the language of our Saviour to Nathanael: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” Here is the true meaning of the ladder. And why should this be deemed unlikely? Was not he always the consolation of Israel? Here were his divinity and humanity; his humiliation, and his exaltation; the one extending to earth, the other to

heaven. Here was a figure of the medium of communications between the upper and the lower world. He is the mediator between God and man. Every blessing comes to us through his interposition; and therefore the ministry of angels. Hence, "Behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it." For through him these celestial beings "are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto them who shall be heirs of salvation." They rejoice when they are converted; they encamp round about them in their dangers, and deliver them; they attend their worshipping assemblies; and at last convey their departing spirits into Abraham's bosom. These angels did not go up and down the ladder after the manner of persons amusing themselves: they ascended to receive their orders, and descended to execute them. Though they excel in strength, they do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. He says to one, Go, and he goeth; to another, Come, and he cometh: and it is his pleasure they regard, and not the nature of the employment; and if two of them were summoned into his presence, and ordered, the one to govern an empire, and the other to shew some Hagar a well, they would repair to their posts with equal readiness and delight—May his will be done on earth as it is done in heaven! What do we read further? "And, behold, the Lord stood above it." Standing was a posture of attention—He was looking down to observe his weary-worn pilgrim sleeping at the foot of the ladder, and every way ready to appear for him. Observe therefore what was *Heard*. God repeats the covenant made with his father, and ratifies it to himself, assuring him that the country in which he was now reposing should be

given to him and his posterity for a possession; that his offspring should be numerous and illustrious; and that one of his descendants should prove a benefactor to all mankind: "I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." But God is a very present help in trouble; he therefore accommodates his promise to his present situation and circumstances: "And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." He was alone, and God engages to be with him—He was exposed, and God engages to keep him—He was an exile, and God engages to bring him home again—And all this issuing from faithfulness itself, and more to be relied on than the continuance of heaven and earth! What could Jacob desire more?

And what was the impression the whole made upon him? "Then Jacob awoke"—Perhaps it was a short sleep, but it was long enough. By the sweet dream attending it he learned what he was ignorant of before he slumbered; namely, that God was there. And he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." How strikingly does this ignorance represent, first, the ignorance of mankind in general! God is everywhere. He is about their path and their lying down—But they do not know, they do not consider, they do not realize it. If they did, how

differently would they speak, and act, and live! Secondly, the ignorance of the people of God themselves. How prone are they to forget their privileges and principles; and to imagine they are left of God in particular situations and difficulties! But they cannot be left, especially in their afflictions; for he has not only said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee—but “I will be with thee in trouble”—“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.” Yet, after all this, divine manifestations often surprise us; and we wonder, where we should only praise.

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## JUNE 18.—MORNING.

“And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”

GEN. xxviii. 17.

SUCH was the exclamation of Jacob after his pleasing dream; when he awoke from sleep and said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not.

It shews us that intercourse with God, instead of favouring levity of mind, produces the most serious impressions. The man that felt no apprehension in the evening at lying down in the open air, enveloped in darkness and surrounded with danger, is afraid in the morning—at what? The thought of a present Deity. This was not indeed a slavish terrifying dread, like that of Belshazzar, when he saw the handwriting upon the wall, when the joints of his loins were loosed,



and his knees smote one against another: but it was reverence and godly fear. It was such as Peter and Isaiah and Job felt, at the manifestation of the Divine glory; and such as the angels feel when they veil their faces before him. Let this rectify the mistake of those who imagine that the doctrines of grace and the work of the Spirit lead people to a kind of careless and presumptuous freedom with God. The experience of every believer gives the lie to this. The nearer he draws to God's seat, and the more intimately he deals with him, the more he sees of his perfections, and the more he feels his own vanity and vileness. And the Scripture assures us that God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.

Wherever God meets with his people, that place deserves to be considered as his house. This is conformable to his own language: "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word." Observe also our Saviour's conversation with the woman of Samaria. Her countrymen supposed that God must be preferably, if not exclusively worshipped on Gerizim; while the Jews thought the same of Jerusalem: but he reminded her that the worship of God did not derive its excellency or acceptableness from locality: "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. God is a



Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

God seldom receives any thing but formality from those worshippers whose bigoted attachment to any particular mode or building leads them to say, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are *we*." Nothing makes a people dear to God but their resemblance of him; and nothing makes any place sacred but the Divine presence—There can be no sanctity in wood and stone—"This," says Jacob of the bare ground on which he had been lying, having seen and heard God there; "*this* is none other than the *house of God*." Our Lord prayed and preached in private dwellings; in the open air; on the side of a mountain; by the way side; and from a fishing-boat, as well as in the synagogue and temple. So did his Apostles. It was not till the end of the third century that Christians had edifices expressly reared for their public worship.

In three cases this remark may encourage us. First, when, by accident, disease, relative affliction, or civil engagement, we are detained from the courts of the Lord. If the heart be there, and we are unavoidably prevented, the Lord will make up the loss, and we shall see his power and glory *as* we have seen him in the sanctuary. Secondly, if Providence should fix our station where we have little or no advantage from the privileges of God's house. John was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, though an exile, and far from the usual appendages of the Sabbath. "I will be," says God, "a little sanctuary to them in the midst of the heathen." Thirdly, in the intervals of public worship. We cannot be always, or very frequently, in the tem-

ple; but we may render every object and every event a preacher; and—

“Where’er we seek him he is found,  
And every place is holy ground.”

Again. The experience of good men even here sometimes approximates them to the world of glory. Jacob saw that he was not in heaven; but in such communion with such manifestations, he thought it could not be far off—“This,” says he, “is none other than the *gate of heaven*.” Carnal men think of heaven (if ever they think of it at all) as a place far off, and to be reached by ascending up thousands of miles through the skies. But, says our Saviour, “the kingdom of God is nigh you. The kingdom of heaven is within you.” And the believer’s present acquaintance with it and participations of it convince him that heaven is a state rather than a place—He has the first-fruits of the Spirit, the earnest of inheritance—He has come to the heavenly Jerusalem, and has everlasting life. And we confine not this to some extraordinary enjoyments in his private and public devotional engagements—in tribulation we have seen him “joyful in glory;” and have heard him “shout aloud upon his bed” of painful sickness, and dying anguish.

Finally, the house of God and the gate of heaven are related to each other; and therefore they are well mentioned together. Not that the connexion between them is inseparable; or that all those who attend the one will enter the other—Far from it. To some the house of God will be the gate of hell, and open to them a passage into greater misery; and the preaching of the word will prove the savour of death unto death. But this is the effect of perversion or misimprovement.

The means of grace are designed and adapted to awaken and secure our attention to the things which belong to our peace. In the house of God many of his people are converted ; and all are comforted, improved, and established. To them the Sabbath is an emblem of, and a preparation for, the rest that remains when the busy week of life is over. They are here learning and loving the song they will sing for ever. The temple below only precedes and introduces the temple above—Thus the pious Philip Henry would often end his “pleasant things,” on the evening of the Lord’s day, by saying—“Well, if this be not heaven, it must be the way to it.”

## JUNE 18.—EVENING.

“After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth ; and found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla ; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome :) and came unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought : for by their occupation they were tentmakers.” Acts xviii. 1—3.

AQUILA and Priscilla were persons of great religious excellence. They are often mentioned with commendation in the Epistles, as well as in the Acts of the Apostles—especially when Paul says to the Romans, “Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus : who have for my life laid down their own necks : unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.” They were born in Pontus—then they resided in Italy—and were now in business at Corinth. Hither they had been driven by an imperial decree ; and probably thought hard of the measure that banished them. But in consequence of this trial

they became acquainted with Paul, and had him for their guest, their friend, and companion. And what a companion must a man of his talents and grace have been! And what an advantage must they have derived from his morning and evening devotions! and his example! and his constant conversation! Surely they would acknowledge, It is good for us that we have been afflicted.

The lives of some have been very changeable: and in their removals, contrary to a disposition to enjoy a fixed and permanent dwelling, they have been ready to murmur and complain. But nothing occurs by chance; and all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth to those that fear him. Let such remember, that they know not what designs God has to accomplish by events of this nature, either with regard to themselves or with regard to their connexions. Let them also reflect, that this is not their rest; and view every present residence as

“Preliminary to the last retreat.”

In proportion as we look after a better country and realize it as our own, all earthly situations will be alike indifferent to us—yea, we shall find each of them none other than the house of God and the gate of Heaven.

Paul not only lodged with them, but wrought: for they were of the same occupation with himself. For though he had been educated at the feet of Gamaliel, he had been bred to the craft of tentmaking. The Jews, whatever was their condition in life, were accustomed to give their sons a calling; wisely considering it a prevention of idleness, a security from temptation, and a resource in accidental indigence. Hence,



of their doctors, one was surnamed Rabbi, the shoemaker ; another, Rabbi, the baker ; another, Rabbi, the carpenter. Ricaut says, the Grand Seigneur, to whom he was an ambassador, was taught to make wooden spoons. Is this degrading ? Seneca says, he would rather be sick and confined to his bed than be unemployed. Adam and Eve were placed in the garden to dress and to keep it. And our Saviour declined not working at his supposed father's business. Paul, the chief of the Apostles, was not ashamed of labour. But, as a man of taste and learning, he must have been fond of reading ; and he desired Timothy to bring him his books and parchments. It seems, therefore, strange that his friends should not have indulged him with leisure and entire freedom for his office also, by exempting him from manual toil. The workman is worthy of his hire ; and this he always claimed as a *right*, contending that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel : adding also, that no man who warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life.

But a right is sometimes to be given up ; and there is no general rule but allows of exceptions. Priscilla and Aquila were not rich, and would lament their inability to do more for their illustrious guest. And he had an independence of mind, and seeing these worthy people themselves labouring to gain a livelihood, he would not be burdensome, but pay for his accommodations. And they are mean souls who will endure to be supported by the alms, and especially by the industry of others, when their own hands are sufficient for them—They who will not work should not eat. In a word, Paul knew the infancy of the cause, and was acquainted with all the circumstances



of the case; and acted, we may be assured, with wisdom and prudence. Yet his conduct displayed the noblest self-denial and zeal.

There are two places in which he refers to his working. The first shews the degree in which he toiled, often—after teaching, sitting up late at night—"Ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for we laboured *night* and day, because we would not be chargeable unto you." The second tells us that his aim was not only to support himself, but to be able to succour others—"Ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered to my necessities, and to *them* that were with me." What a soul had this man! And how well could he add—"I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive!"

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## JUNE 19.—MORNING.

"Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." 2 TIM. ii. 1.

WE may have this grace, and not be strong in it. The reality is one thing; the degree is another. We read of weak faith, as well as of strong faith. There are lambs in our Shepherd's fold, as well as sheep: and in our Father's house there are little children, as well as young men. But while there is in religion an infancy which is natural and lovely; there is also another which is unlooked for and offensive—it is the effect of relapse. It is not of the beginning of the Divine life, but of an after period, the Apostle speaks, when, reproving the Hebrews, he says, "Ye are

*become* such as have need of milk, and not of strong drink." We must not despise the day of small things. The Saviour himself does not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax; but he is concerned to bring forth judgment unto victory. And while the feeble-minded are to be comforted, the slothful are to be stimulated; and all are to be kept from "settling upon their lees."

Every thing shews how necessary it is to be *strong* in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Your dangers require it—These are to be found in all the relations, offices, conditions, and circumstances of life. Your passions are not wholly mortified—There is the sin that yet dwelleth in you—The world lieth in wickedness; and you are passing through it—Your adversary, the Devil, goeth about seeking whom he may devour. How much depends upon one instance of falling! And did not Abraham equivocate? Did not Moses speak unadvisedly? Did not Peter deny his Lord? And what says all this to us? Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Your duties require it, You have a family; and with your house you are to serve the Lord. You have a calling; and in this you are to abide with God. You have the exercises of devotion, in which you are to worship God in spirit and in truth. You have to walk by faith and not by sight. You are to have your conversation in heaven, while every thing conspires to keep you down to earth.

Your usefulness requires it. You are not to live to yourselves, but to him that died for you, and rose again. You are to look not on your own things, but also on the things of others. You are to walk in wisdom towards them that are without, and endeavour

to win souls. You are to do good, as you have opportunity, unto all men, especially unto those that are of the household of faith.

Your trials require it. Who but must reckon upon these in a world like this? And if you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small. To glorify God in the fires, and to recommend religion by its supports and comforts, when every thing else fails, demands no small share of grace.

Your consolations require it. Consolations are not only delightful, but they are even of practical importance in religion. They enlarge the heart, and enliven zeal, and embolden courage, and wean from the world—And you read of a peace that passeth all understanding! and a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory! Yet what do some of you know of these? More grace would bring more evidence; and raise you more above your fears and depressions. “If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.”

Death requires it. Other events may, but this must occur. It is a melancholy day to those that have no God; and a very serious one to those who have. To think of it—to meet it—with triumph—or even with confidence—will not this call for more grace than you now possess? And what is the language of all these demands? Despond? No—but be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Without him you can do nothing: but through his strengthening of you, you can do all things.

Rest not, therefore, in any present attainment. Like Paul, forget the things that are behind, and reach forth unto those that are before. It is to be lamented that we are easily dissatisfied where we ought to be content; and content where we ought to be dissatisfied.

In temporal matters we should have our conversation without covetousness, and be content with such things as we have. But here, alas! we are avariciously anxious. And though three feet are enough for us in the cradle, and seven in the grave, nothing can satisfy us between. But, in *spiritual* things, with what trifling acquisitions are we contented! Yet here it is even our *duty* to be covetous, to be ambitious! And as before us lies an infinite fulness, and we are not straitened in our resources, let us not be straitened in our desires and expectations: let us ask and receive, that our joy may be full

## JUNE 19.—EVENING.

“I am Alpha and Omega.” REV. i. 8.

ALPHA and Omega are the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet; and therefore stand for the commencement and termination of any concern in question—Therefore it is here added by way of explanation, “The beginning and the ending.”

It is proper to observe that this is the way in which God characterizes himself: “Thus saith the Lord the king of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first and I am the last; and beside me there is no God”—This is very decisive. And yet the Lord Jesus applies this title to himself. “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty”—We are not ignorant of the pretence of some, that God the Father is here intended; but nothing like evidence supports it; while the attempt itself betrays a concession that *if* the words were the words of our Saviour, his divinity would be established.



But read again: "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead: and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." And again: "It is done. I am Alpha and Omega the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." "And behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." Here *he* is undeniably the speaker; and equally is he so in our text. Now if he had been thus called only in one place, it would have been sufficient for our purpose: but the frequency of the appropriation of the title shews how necessary it is that we always entertain proper apprehensions of his greatness.

But what is the import of the title itself? First, it regards his nature, and shews the duration of it. It never began, and will never end. Hence in another place he is said to be "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." And Paul holds forth this truth by comparing, or rather contrasting him with the creation—He was before the world appeared; and he will be when it is no more: "Thou, Lord, in the beginning



hast laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish: but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." It is true that angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, and even glorified bodies, will be immortal. But they will not continue *like* him. They are only streams, he is the fountain of life. They are branches, he is the vine that sustains them. In him they will live, and move, and have their being for ever. If he should suspend his influence for a moment, they would return to their original nothingness—"He only," therefore, "hath immortality."

It also regards his agency—The continuance and exclusiveness of it—That he is the commencer and completer—That he is all in all—In what?

Let us look at creation. Modern science has surprisingly enlarged our conceptions of the magnitude and extent of the universe; but, glorious and immense as it is—we use only the language of Scripture: "All things were made by him; and without him was not not any thing made that was made." "By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him." Thus he is the first Cause, and the last End of the whole.

Let us look at providence. Preservation, if it be not a continued creation, requires a continual influence—"And he is before all things, and by him all things consist." "He upholdeth all things by the word of his power." How many creatures are there visible,

and what myriads of myriads more, that are invisible, in the air, the water, and the earth! And the eyes of all wait upon him. He openeth his hand and satisfieth every living thing. He is the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. He raises them up,\* and brings them down, as he pleases: they fulfil his purposes, and will be judged at his tribunal. Empires are formed or destroyed at his nod. All their revolutions are connected with his cause; and the kingdom and nation that will not serve him shall perish. He is the head over all things to the Church which is his body; the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Let us look at redemption. He trod the winepress alone; and of the people there were none with him. By himself he purged our sins. When he died he said, It is finished. And by the one offering up of himself, we are assured he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. And he is not only the Alpha and Omega in obtaining eternal redemption for us, but in the application of it. He saves us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. We live in the Spirit; we walk in the Spirit; and this Spirit is "the Spirit of Christ," and derived *only* from him. The Apostle therefore calls him "the author and finisher of our faith." He is all that faith sees, lays hold of, relies upon, rejoices and glories in. Whose blood but his cleanses us from all sin? Whose righteousness but his can we mention in our approach to God? In whom alone are we free from all condemnation? He *only* lives to make intercession for us. He *only* is our advocate with the Father. In him *all* fulness dwells. Neither is there salvation in *any* other; for there is no other Name given under heaven among men whereby we must be

saved. He produces also the *grace* of faith: he maintains it; he perfects it: and therefore the Apostles addressed themselves to him, saying, Lord, increase our faith. And the same, by a parity of reason, may be said of all our religious principles and dispositions. He is the author and finisher of our hope; the author and finisher of our patience; the author and finisher of our humility, our peace, our joy. Therefore on him all believers *alone* depend, and to him *alone* they ascribe the praise and glory of all they possess. "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."

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JUNE 20.—MORNING.

"Thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy Name."

PSALM lxi. 5.

So then, they that fear God have an heritage. All of them have not an heritage in the world. And they need not be ashamed to own it: they have the honour of conformity to their Lord and Saviour, who had not where to lay his head. And though they have nothing, they yet possess all things—"I know thy poverty; but thou art rich." Indeed, even as to temporal good, they are above others. He blesses their bread and their water; and bread and water, with the favour of God, are dainties. And a little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked. It is not only sweeter, but safer, and will go further. The grace of God will make a little go a great way. This we have often seen; and we should have been amazed how some individuals, with their very slender means, could make a decent appearance,

and pay their way, and have a trifle to give to him that needeth—did we not know that the secret of the Lord was upon their tabernacle. Godliness also, with contentment, is great gain. Contentment is a kind of self-sufficiency. It does not allow us to want what Providence denies. And who, whatever be his affluence, can be more than content? A man is satisfied with much less in a journey than he has at home. Now regeneration makes a man a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth: and then reason, as well as faith, says to him,

“Turn, pilgrim, turn; thy cares forego;  
All earth-born cares are wrong:  
Man wants but little here below;  
Nor wants that little long!”

But as to spiritual good, they may well say, The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage. For the Lord is the portion of their inheritance, and of their cup. His testimonies are their heritage for ever; and they find them the rejoicing of their hearts. All the exceeding great and precious promises are theirs. And theirs is the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them. Compared with this, what was the heritage of a Jew in Canaan? of Adam in Paradise? What is the heritage of a crowned worldling? of an angel in glory? Yet this is as true as it is wonderful—“This is the heritage of the servants of God; and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.”

For this heritage is not obtained by force, nor by purchase, nor by desert; but by bounty and grace—it is “given.”

And we may know that we possess it. David

speaks without any hesitation—Thou *hast* given *me* the heritage of those that fear thy Name.

Oh that I could read my title clear! Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion. I long to be able to praise thee as the health of my countenance, and my God. Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation. And shew me a token for good.

Above all, as—whatever they may doubt or fear—blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled; enable me—if I cannot say with confidence, Thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy Name; enable me to pray, with supreme desire, “Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.”

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JUNE 20.—EVENING.

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink.”

Exod. xvii. 5, 6.

WE should learn two things from this interposition. The one regards the providence of God. The other the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It should teach us to rely on the providence of God in our difficulties and straits. The trial was great—They pitched in Rephidim, and the people had no water to drink. Consider how indispensable



this supply was, in a dry place, under a burning sun, and with such an immense multitude of men, women, children, and cattle! What lowings of the herds! What piercing cries of the infants! What anguish is parching thirst!—God could have led them to a place where were wells of water, or have rained down showers upon them; but this would not have been so sensible and striking a display of omnipotence as bringing water at once by a stroke out of a rock, which, as we learn from two other passages of Scripture, was a rock of flint; and in such abundant effusions. “He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers.” What a foundation for their hope in God!

Yet see their unbelief. We should have thought it impossible for them, after such a proof of his almightiness and all-sufficiency, to have questioned whether he *could* deliver or relieve them: “Yet they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people?” So it was with them—But how was it with Moses, when God had engaged to furnish the people with flesh for a month? Moses said, “The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them? And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord’s hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not.” How was it with

our Lord's own disciples? They had seen him from a most scanty supply feed a vast multitude, so that as distributors they had twenty-fold more in their hands when they left off than they began with: yet when they were in the boat, they began to despond, because they had but one loaf! And has not this been still more the case with us? Are we not always limiting the Holy One of Israel, and ready to say, "There is no hope," especially when the usual expedients fail us? But we should remember that nothing is too hard for the Lord; and that if he does not find a way for our release or relief, he can furnish one. Our extremity is his opportunity. He does not prevent darkness; but to the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: and it is often darkest before break of day. He turneth the shadow of death into the morning. He loves to appear to our joy, when all prospect that we should be saved is taken away. Let us remember that what is impossible to us is easy to him. Who ordered the fish to bring Peter the tribute money? Who multiplied the widow's oil and meal? Who brought Elijah bread and meat in the morning and in the evening? Who turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters?

It will readily be conceded that we are not to look for miracles now. But we are to look for him who performed them, who is a very present help in trouble, whose hand is not shortened that it cannot save, and whose ear is not heavy that it cannot hear. He has said, and the Scripture cannot be broken, "Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure;" and, "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."

But his work is perfect, his ways are judgment. We do many things to accomplish one purpose; he accomplishes many purposes by one thing. This interposition therefore not only displays the Providential care of God, and teaches us to trust in him in all difficulties and exigences; but it also furnishes an emblem of the Saviour's grace. We love not the spiritualizers of the Scripture. They give it meanings which it never had, finding facts in figures and figures in facts, just as it serves their vain fancies, till soberminded people are tempted to think that it has no certain and fixed sense in it at all. But here we follow an inspired guide—"And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."

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## JUNE 21.—MORNING

"Neither give place to the Devil." EPH. iv. 27.

IF this admonition be connected with the words immediately preceding—"Be ye angry and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath;" the Apostle intimates that sinful passion arises from the influence of the Devil; and that, when it prevails, we give up ourselves to his power. And can there be a truer specimen of hell than a man in a state of fury and revenge?

But there is nothing in the case that requires us to confine the address to the repulsion of wrath. The truth is, that Satan has access to us, and in various ways is always endeavouring to encroach upon us; and it must be our object to repel him. The image

is familiar and striking. If an enemy was trying to enter your field, your garden, or your house, you would withstand him: for you would see, that as you yielded, he advanced. In every successful temptation, Satan gains upon us, and takes a position which we ought to have kept.

With the philosophy of this subject we have nothing to do, but only with the fact itself. The sacred writers as much support the doctrine of diabolical agency as of Divine. They make use of the same terms and phrases in the one case as in the other. Is God said to open the eyes of our understanding? Satan is said to blind the minds of them that believe not. Is God said to work in us to will and to do? Satan is the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Are Christians filled with the Spirit? Why, says Peter to Ananias, has Satan filled thine heart?

But while the fact is proved, nothing is said of the mode in which his operations are carried on. We cannot think, however, that it is always done personally and immediately. This would involve an impossibility. If he were *thus* soliciting every individual in every part of the earth at the same time, and his work *is* always going on, he must be omnipresent and omniscient. But he is the god of this world: and having under him all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; and having all the errors and the wickedness which *he* has introduced into our region to make use of; and such a depraved nature as ours to work upon—he has power enough to employ *mediately* for all his purposes. The bird need not be afraid of the fowler if he keeps away from his gun and his snare; for he



is not in much danger from his fingers. How is the fish taken? The angler does not wade into the water, and seize it in his hand. He does not even *see* his prey: but he reaches it, and secures it, by a baited hook at the end of his line, and his rod. Yet *he* catches the fish; and would do the same if his instrument was a mile long.

There are many reasons why we should not give place to the Devil. One is, because his designs are always bad. He may transform himself into an angel of light. And he may endeavour to introduce his evils and mischiefs under specious names: representing covetousness as laying up for the children; and pride as dignity; and revenge as a becoming spirit; and trimming in religion as prudence; and conformity to the world as winning others—Thus we are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. But we ought not to be ignorant of Satan's devices. We read of his depths and his wiles. And God in his word tears off all his disguises; and shews us at once that his aim is only to ensnare, and enslave, and rob, and degrade, and wound, and destroy. He therefore that yields, wrongeth his own soul, and loves death.

Another is, because the more you give way, the more advantage he has over you. It will always be found much more easy to keep him out than to get him out. When the Moors were admitted into Spain, they staid there for more than six hundred years, in spite of every groan and effort—so much harder is expulsion than exclusion.

Let us therefore avoid parleying with this enemy. He will rise in his demands with every concession. He is not to be treated with, but rejected. Let us guard against beginnings; they increase unto more



ungodliness. In this down-hill course we easily proceed from evil to evil. When a person walks out in the morning clean in his apparel, he is cautious how he treads; and the first soil he contracts affects him: but the second offends him less; and the third much less still; till he says, "It matters not now"—and heedlessly dashes on. The youth is not profligate at once: but evil communications corrupt good manners. The first time he complies with a temptation he feels a reluctance, and after the crime is committed, his conscience smites him. But a degree of this is overcome by every subsequent repetition; and the profaner of the Sabbath, and the drunkard, and the sensualist, go boldly on, waxing worse and worse. One sin naturally leads to another; prepares for another; pleads for another; and renders another necessary, either by way of concealment or finish. Thus David, to hide his adultery, commits murder; and then impiously ascribes this to the providence of God—"The sword smiteth all alike"!

Another reason is, because you need not yield. You are not forced. If the Devil compelled you, he would also justify you; for there can be no guilt where there is no liberty. The motives to commit sin can never be so great as the arguments to forbear. What can weigh for a moment against the authority of an Infinite Being on whom we entirely depend? And what is any indulgence or suffering, compared with endless happiness or misery? Would God have enjoined upon us a thing that is impracticable? And is not his grace sufficient for us? And is it not attainable by us? Is not his promise true; Ask, and it shall be given you? And, in the history and experience of his people in all ages, do we not see proof

of this? Have not multitudes in the same condition, exposed to the same perils, feeling the same weaknesses and depravity, been more than conquerors?

Finally, resistance is the way to success, and insures it. Hence, says God, resist the Devil, and he will flee from you. Can God be mistaken? Can he deceive? And does not every one know that persons slacken in any course of action, in proportion as they want encouragement? For hope is the mainspring of motion. If a beggar be relieved, however slenderly or seldom, he will in extremity repair to the door again—but not if he be positively and invariably refused.

Resist, therefore, *stedfastly*; and shew that you are in earnest and determined. For there is a heartless undecided refusal that invites renewed application—or at least does not shut the door entirely against opportunity. If Satan cannot look into the heart, he is acquainted with the ways in which it shews itself; and is sure to know whether there is a latent wandering after what is professedly renounced—and so will be led to watch his opportunity, and ply his means.

—But the Apostle adds, Resist him *stedfastly—in the faith*. There is no fighting on a quagmire. Faith furnishes the only solid, the only safe, ground on which we can contend. Faith clothes us with the whole armour of God. Faith connects us with the Captain of our salvation, without whom we can do nothing; but through whose strengthening of us we can do all things—

“And Satan trembles when he sees  
The weakest saint upon his knees.”

“A Friend and Helper so Divine  
Doth my weak courage raise :  
He makes the glorious vict’ry mine;  
And his shall be the praise.”

## JUNE 21.—EVENING.

“And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.”

1 COR. X. 4.

How was that Rock *Christ*? Not really, but typically. How was it a *spiritual* Rock? Not by substance, but by signification; not by its quality, but by its use. We should not press a metaphor beyond its lawful bounds. But the analogy in the case before us holds—

With regard to the Rock *itself*. A rock is remarkable for its solidity, strength, duration, support, shelter, and shade; and so is a just and striking emblem of Christ, who is so often expressed by the name. It holds also

With regard to the *striking*. The Rock was smitten: and Christ once suffered, the just for the unjust. The Rock was smitten publicly in the sight of the elders and of the people: and Christ suffered at Jerusalem in the presence of a similar multitude. The Rock was smitten by Moses: and the Law, of which he is the representative, inflicted the death of Christ; he redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us. Till the rock was thus smitten, it yielded no supplies: and Christ being made perfect through suffering, became the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him. Who could have expected that the smiting of a rock would have furnished a flood of living waters? It was the Lord's doing and is marvellous in our eyes. And Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to them which are called,

both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God. The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men—Which things the angels desire to look into. It also holds

With regard to the *streams*. What did these serve to express? The blood of Jesus; which “is drink indeed”—The doctrines of the Gospel; whose tidings to the distressed conscience are like cold water to a thirsty soul, and afford a refreshment and satisfaction which no philosophy can furnish—The influences of the Holy Ghost: according to the promise, “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty; and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:” and the invitation, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink—This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.”

One circumstance must not be overlooked. The streams not only relieved their present wants, but secured them future supplies; for it was in these the rock followed them in their journeys, so that they were constantly refreshed by them. As long as we are in the wilderness, our spiritual wants will return: but the Saviour will never leave us; and as our days, so shall our strength be. Thus our condition is softened; and we can sometimes sing the Lord’s song in a strange land. But soon the sun shall not light on us, nor any heat; for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed us, and lead us unto living fountains of water.

Let us read the Old Testament under the extensions and applications of the New. It was designed to furnish shadows of good things to come; but the body is Christ.



Let us bless *him* who was smitten that we might drink of the river of his pleasure. The rock in the wilderness was smitten unconsciously: but Jesus was exceeding sorrowful even unto death: and he knew the expensiveness of his interposition on our behalf; yet he more than consented to the condition—he delighted in the sacrifice.

“Oh,” said David, “Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!” And three of his brave followers broke through the garrison of the Philistines, and brought him a supply. But, said he, “it is the price of blood;” and he was too generous to drink what had endangered life in the procuring. Behold how *they* loved *him*. But what was their love to their sovereign, compared with the Saviour’s love to *us*! He actually poured out his soul unto death, that we might live through him, and with joy draw water out of the wells of salvation. This is indeed the price of blood, of blood divine! Yet he is charmed to see us partake of the costly privilege!

As from the gushings of the rock there was more than a sufficiency for all the multitude; so in Jesus there is enough for all, and to spare; for it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.

As all were welcome to drink of the abundance, so none are forbidden here. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

We have met with a painting of this scene. Some were represented as pressing close to the fissures to



catch the enlivening draught: others, as falling down upon their knees to drink of the bubbling flow. Fathers and mothers were eager to impart to their parched children who stretched out their eager hands and necks. Others were hastening to bear relief to the lame, the sick, the dying—It is this eagerness for relief and gratification which explains the allusion of Moses: “He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock.” It was not oil or honey; but it was as good—it tasted as rich as oil—as sweet as honey. And did we but thirst as they did, such would be our longings after the Saviour: so precious would be a participation of his benefits; so eager should we be, not only to obtain supplies for ourselves, but to communicate them to others also.

How well do those who refuse these rich and blessed streams deserve the place where in vain they will call for a drop of water to cool their tongue! This is the condemnation—“Ye would not come unto me, that ye might have life.”

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## JUNE 22.—MORNING.

“He left Judæa, and departed again into Galilee. And he must needs go through Samaria.” JOHN iv. 3, 4.

FOR two reasons. Because Samaria lay in his passage—and because he had in design the conversion of this poor woman. We cannot imagine an event of such magnitude in itself—for there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner

that repenteth: and attended with such consequences as this was—for it involved the salvation also of many of the Samaritans—we cannot imagine that such an event was accidental. Nothing takes place by chance in our most common affairs—and is the conversion of a soul for everlasting blessedness a casualty?

In the recovery of sinners, the grace of God is equally necessary and illustrious. By grace are we saved through faith; and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast: for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus. And, in the conversion Jesus here accomplished, we have an example of this grace. An example of its freeness; of its gentleness; of its power; and of its effects.

Of its *freeness*—in selecting this wicked wretch, in spite of her unworthiness, and without her desire; and making her not only the partaker, but the instrument, of his goodness.

Of its *gentleness*—in having recourse to no means of alarm; no violence. No angel appears with a drawn sword; no lightnings flash; no thunder rolls; no threatening terrifies. All is mercy, all is mildness: and he employs circumstances the most natural and suitable, to bring her to conviction, and to induce her to pray.

Of its *power*—in the victory it gained over the corruptions of her heart. If there be a moral disorder that seems incurable; or an evil capable of resisting all reasoning and motive; it is the spirit of impurity. But behold here a new creature! She is not only pardoned, but renewed; and the change wrought at once!

Of its *effects*—She not only believes with the heart,

but confesses with the mouth. She is not only enlightened, but inflamed. No sooner has she gained good than she is concerned to do good. Personal religion becomes social. She cannot for a moment keep from others what she has seen and heard herself—What benevolence! What zeal! What urgency! What fortitude! “The woman then left her water-pot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?”—And what success too! For they who speak from experience seldom speak in vain. “Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.” Some of these might have accompanied her from curiosity; and some from the mere contagion of example: but not a few were deeply and savingly impressed. “And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him, for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. So, when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days.”

The sight of this had so affected our Saviour as, it would seem, to take away his appetite. He had been hungry, as well as thirsty: and the disciples had gone away into the city to buy meat. But when they returned, and prayed him, saying, Master, eat; he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. And when they said one to another, Hath any man brought him aught to eat? he said, “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.” What a repast have I had since you left me! A poor, sinful Samaritaness has been here. And I have manifested myself to her. And, under the impression, she has hastened to inform and invite her neighbours

to come and hear me—and has prevailed! “Say not ye, there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest?” But see the encouragement you have to scatter the seeds of Divine truth. “Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields”—see the woman and her company coming over yonder plain—“for they are white already to harvest.” Here the success is so immediate, that “the sower and the reaper rejoice *together*”—And so it is written: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seeds; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.”

## JUNE 22.—EVENING.

“Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the defenced cities of Judah, and took them. And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem unto king Hezekiah with a great army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller’s field.” ISAIAH xxxvi. 1, 2.

HERE was a great danger. The enemy was powerful. He had subdued many other countries. He was now invading Judah; and carrying every thing before him. He had already taken every stronghold in his way, and was come to the very gate of Jerusalem. The Lord frequently does not appear for his servants till all hope that they should be saved is taken away. Hence it has grown into a proverb, that our extremity is God’s opportunity—“In the mount it shall be seen.”

He does not hinder our sun from going down; but he prevents the darkness we foreboded, and at evening time it is light! Thus it was with Hezekiah.



Observe under this alarming trial what he felt. "It came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth." So Job, that example of patience, when he had heard the successive messengers of woe, "arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped." A natural hardihood, a stoical insensibility, is not patience or submission; yea, it renders the exercise of them impossible. There is no patience in bearing what we do not feel, or resignation in giving up what we do not value. The grace of God keeps us from despising the chastening of the Lord, as well as from fainting when we are rebuked of him; and afflictions only yield profit to them that are exercised thereby.

Observe also what he did. He betook himself to prayer. It was his duty, it was his privilege. It distinguished him from men of the world, who have recourse to suicide, or dissipation, or creature-assistance—*God* was his refuge and strength, a present help in trouble. "He went into the house of the Lord." No doubt he retired and poured out his soul before the Lord in his closet; but God is known in his palaces for a refuge. Hence he also sent a deputation to engage the supplications of Isaiah the prophet: "And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy; for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth. It may be the Lord thy God will hear the words of Rabshekah, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove the words which the Lord thy God hath heard; wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left." This shews the sense he had of



his own imperfections ; and his confidence that the fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Nor was he disappointed.

Observe what he gained—a complete deliverance. Who ever sought the Lord in vain? How readily does he answer the cries of his people! What wonders has prayer achieved! Prayer is our best weapon—Hezekiah conquered upon his knees.

The deliverance was not only in answer to prayer, but it was foretold. “Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say unto your master, Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land ; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it.” By announcing a thing so improbable, the Lord not only shewed his foreknowledge, but afforded Hezekiah an immediate ground of confidence. He could have done all without promising it ; but the word would prove the trial of his faith. If he believed it, his fears would be forthwith removed, and his mind be kept in perfect peace, being stayed upon God.

The deliverance was also founded in a remarkable reason. The reason is twofold. First, says he, “I will defend the city for mine own sake.” The foe has been blaspheming me, as if I were one of the gods of the heathen, whose worshippers he has conquered, weak as they, unable to save those who trust in me. But I will display my perfections, and vindicate the

glory of my Name. Accordingly Hezekiah had pleaded this: "Incline thine ear, O Lord, and hear; open thine eyes, O Lord, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God. Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries, and have cast their gods into the fire; for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them. Now therefore, O Lord our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord, even thou only."

Secondly, I will do it "for my servant David's sake." How honourable was this to the character of the man after his own heart! A similar allusion was often made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. From the beginning some were blessed for the sake of others. It was to shew God's regard to righteousness; to enforce religion from its relative influence and advantages; and to prepare for a belief in the mediation of the Messiah, for whose obedience unto death all the families of the earth are blessed. The deliverance also was supernaturally accomplished: "Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses." What a destruction was here! And what an idea does it give us of the power of these Messengers of God, who excel in strength and do his commandments! How safe and how happy are they who have the Lord of hosts on their side! If God be for us, who can be against us?

But woe to those who provoke a Being whose word

arms every creature against them ! What will it be “when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his *mighty* angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe !”

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## JUNE 23.—MORNING.

“The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace.” PSALM xxix. 11.

THE God of Nature gave David a fine poetical talent. And he employed it like a good man, for his own improvement, and the profit of many. It is well to take advantage of the excitement of any present feeling; and to give it a religious direction; according to the admonition of the apostle James: Is any afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. David did this; for he was accustomed to put his sentiment into verse, on the occurrence of any interesting or significant event. Many of his psalms took their rise from a trouble or a deliverance he had just experienced. The thirty-first psalm was written at the dedication of his new house. The hundred and fourth was a spring meditation. The eighth is a night scene. The nineteenth, a morning piece. The lines before us were composed in a thunder storm.

Thunder is one of the sublimest displays of Deity. It generally produces fearfulness and terror. Caligula, the emperor, at the hearing of it, would creep into any hole or corner. But such a man should reflect, that if God has a mind to kill him, he can do it without

raising Nature into a storm—his breath is in his nostrils: he is crushed before the moth—"Thine eye is upon me, and I am not!" And we should do well to think of a more dreadful event. Baxter did this. When a storm came on as he was preaching, and the congregation was obviously disconcerted and dismayed, he paused, and then said, "Men and brethren, we are assembled here to prepare for that hour when the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and all the works that are therein, shall be burned up."

All greatness is comparative. David therefore naturally addresses "The mighty" as much as to say to them,—You are flattered, and feared; but what is the greatest of you before *Him*! Think of the THUNDERER, and adore. "Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his Name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thundereth: the Lord is upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness: the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests." Here let the mind review the description; and we shall see how truly and vividly David's imagination marked and portrayed the circumstances and effects of the phenomenon—



He then leads us from the uproar of Nature to the small still voice of *grace*. He retires with us into the sanctuary of God, *there* to testify the glory of his *goodness*; and to calm and cheer us with the assurance of his *providential* empire over all the commotions of life, and his attention to the welfare of his people: "And in his temple doth every one speak of his glory. The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever. The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace."

But this promise, you say, is made to "his people." It is. Be not afraid. Perhaps they will not be found so unlike yourselves as you imagine. It is here implied, that they are *weak* and *distressed*. They want strength and peace. And both these blessings are insured.

Are they by nature without strength? And have they from experience a growing conviction of their inability? Yet, with all this sense of weakness, have they trials to endure? duties to perform? a race to run? a warfare to accomplish? As their day, so shall their strength be. His grace is sufficient for them. Let the weak say, I am strong.

Do they need rest and refreshing? The God of peace shall give them peace always by all means. Not worldly peace. He has nowhere absolutely engaged to give this—We say *absolutely*; for if it be good for them, they shall not want it: for they shall want *no* good thing. But there is a peace as far exceeding every other as the soul surpasses the body, and eternity exceeds time—the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, and which keeps the heart and mind through Christ Jesus. This does not de-



pend upon outward things. In the world, says the Saviour, ye shall have tribulation ; but in me ye shall have peace. And hence, as when weak they are strong—so, though sorrowful, they are always rejoicing.

Yet it is only the beginning of it they have here. At death they enter into peace fully. Every enemy is then vanquished. The din of war is heard no more. The dangerous, treacherous, raging, sickly sea is crossed—And then they are glad because they be quiet. So he bringeth them unto their desired haven.

## JUNE 23.—EVENING.

“Where two or three are gathered together—”

MATT. xviii. 20.

THERE are *circumstances* which are not essential to the nature, acceptance, and usefulness of divine worship. Two of these our Saviour here mentions.

The first regards *place*—“*Where*”—let it be where it will—in the sanctuary, or in the private dwelling, or in the barn, or in the field—“*Where* two or three are gathered together in my Name, *there* am I in the midst of them.” “The hour cometh,” says Jesus to the woman of Samaria, “when neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, shall men worship the Father :” that is, exclusively. Thus he dwelleth not in temples made with hands : but wherever we worship him in spirit and in truth, we are accepted of him. As to external sanctity, all places are alike to him. It is his presence that confers sacredness and dignity. And where has this not been enjoyed ? When Jacob on his journey awoke in the morning, though there was no edifice near, he said, “This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of hea-

ven." Our Lord, in the days of his flesh, not only worshipped in the temple, but in the synagogues; and preached by the side of the mountain, and the way-side, and the sea-side, and on board a barge: and he gives proof, now, that he is to be found wherever he is sought. Where the King is, there is the Court: but some think more of the place than of the king. Their prejudices and bigotry would confine his regards. But while they cry, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are *we*," he graciously says, "In *all* places where I record my Name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee."

The second regards *number*—"Where *two* or *three* are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them." It was not without design that our Lord, instead of a multitude, which seems imposing and striking, specifies such a few. It would rectify the mistake of the Jews, who contended that there must be always ten persons present at least to give efficacy to social prayer. It would encourage his followers both in cases of choice and necessity. Some few may be disposed to meet together for prayer, reading the Scripture, pious conversation, or to arrange or execute plans of usefulness; and why may they not expect that *he* will meet with them? Did not he join the two disciples going to Emmaus, and made their hearts burn within them? Let us make him our subject, and he will become our companion. When two or three fellow-citizens happen to be in the same place abroad, they soon hail each other and become acquainted: they are sure to meet together, and commune concerning the difference between their present residence and their own country; and inquire

when they heard from home, and when they think of returning. How is it that Christians, who are strangers and sojourners, do not oftener “meet and mingle?” and compare the vanity of this world with the worth of their own? and, joyful, as the children of Zion, in their King, talk of the glory of his kingdom, and abundantly utter the memory of his great goodness?

But there are cases in which only a few *can* meet together. Persecution formerly prevented or dispersed the worshippers; and only small parties, in places of concealment, and in the night, could assemble—Yet these were distinguished seasons and services. When the Gospel now first enters a town or village, it frequently meets with opposition; and fear and shame restrain many from attending. Yet let not the day of small things be despised. Some of our most flourishing churches arose from very inconsiderable beginnings—a few from time to time passed along, unnoticed or reproached, to some poor apartment, where they claimed the Saviour’s promise, and found it good to be there—And now the little one has become a thousand—What has God wrought! If the weather reduces the number, let us not, if possible, be absent ourselves—The exertion and self-denial will not be in vain—Them that honour him he will honour; and they that despise him will be lightly esteemed.

This also teaches ministers. Popular excitement is pleasing. But multitude is not essential to usefulness. A sportsman has fired into a flight of birds and not killed one; and he has killed one when he has had only one to aim at. When tempted to excuse himself from going, or to *neglect preparation* because there

is such a handful of poor rustics, let the preacher remember the value of a soul—Let him remember that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over *one* sinner that repenteth—Let him remember that a much greater than himself—the Lord of all, will be there—“For where two or three are gathered together in his Name, there is he in the midst of them.”

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## JUNE 24.—MORNING.

“In my Name.” MATT. xviii. 20.

WE have seen that no stress is to be laid on the *circumstances* of the worship. But it is otherwise with the *nature* of it. The *place* and the *number* of the assembly are nothing: “*where*”—let it be where it will—“*two* or *three*”—if there be no more—“are gathered together,” it is enough—if they are “gathered together IN HIS NAME.” But this is essential to Christian worship. What is the meaning of the requisition?

We cannot do it in his Name unless we do it by his *authority*. This import of the phrase is too obvious to require proof or exemplification. Jesus is the Judge and the King in his Church: his will is made known in his word: to this our appeal is to be made in all spiritual concerns; it is the only rule by which we are to walk. It matters not who enjoins if he forbids, or who forbids if he enjoins—To the law and to the testimony. Nothing is binding on the conscience without his sanction: but his followers must say, “All the Lord commandeth us we will do”—And *because* he commands it.

We cannot do it in his Name unless we do it for *his sake*. When a speaker says, “in the name of rea-



son and common sense," he means, by the respect which it is supposed men are ready to pay to them. If, in arguing with a rebellious child, I was to plead "in the name of her who bore him," I should be understood to mean, by the affection he owed to so dear a relation. And when our Lord speaks of our "receiving a little child in his Name," he means, from regard to himself—or because we are desirous of serving and honouring him. He always demands a supreme regard from his disciples. He tells them that whoever loves father, or mother, or wife, or child, more than himself, is not worthy of him. And he deserves what he requires. And when we are brought to know him, we shall feel no reluctance thus to regard his dear Name. "How much do I owe him! What has he not done for me! He has made, preserved, redeemed, saved me. When I consider the state in which he found me—the condition to which he has advanced me—and the awful and expensive manner in which he has accomplished my salvation; I feel that I am not my own. Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And does he require us to sanctify his day, to repair to his house, to hear his word, to address his throne, to approach his table; we shall not only do it, but—it is the nature of love, we shall do it with pleasure; and the duty will be found our privilege.

We cannot do it in his Name, unless we do it in a *dependence on his mediation*. Now there are two things which we must rely upon him for. The one is, assistance. We can only serve him in strength derived from him. These are his own words, "Abide in me. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except



ye abide in me: for without me ye can do nothing." Our work is great; and we are weak: but his grace is sufficient for us. The service asks the utmost spirituality; and we feel every thing but a suitableness to it when we engage: but "the preparation of the heart, and the answer of the tongue, are from the Lord." The supply of his Spirit helpeth our infirmities, and keeps us under our discouragements from giving up so poor and defective a course of duty and devotion.

The other is acceptance. We are to come unto God by him; and by him we are to offer up all our spiritual sacrifices. If we are accepted, it must be in the Beloved, not only as to our persons, but services. A Christian feels this. His imperfections are his afflictions; and he is conscious of so many deficiencies, that he would have no delight or confidence in drawing near to God without this hope. If when he examines himself, and the sins of his holy things appear, he feels relief, it is by looking unto Jesus. But when he views the infinite value of his sacrifice, the perfection of his obedience, the prevalency of his intercession and advocacy; he has humble boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. And even originally he could not have been so endeared to God as he now is—thus coming in his Name; sprinkled with his blood; and making mention of his righteousness only.

What a difference is there between the language of the Scripture concerning Christ, and the sentiments entertained of him by some who yet consider themselves to be Christians! *They* refer to him so rarely and so slenderly, that their hearers may almost be considered "as without Christ." But the Scripture

tells us that “we are complete in him”—That he “is all and in all”—That “whatsoever we do in word or deed, we are to do *all* in THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS.”

## JUNE 24.—EVENING.

“There am I in the midst of them.” MATT. xviii. 20.

A LARGE portion of the Scripture is promissory; and the promises it contains are exceeding great and precious. Some of these, as we should naturally expect, are designed and adapted to excite and encourage us in the exercises of Divine worship. Accordingly the Lord said of old, “In all places where I record my Name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.” And if such was his language to Jewish worshippers, what says he to Christian assemblies? “Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, THERE AM I IN THE MIDST OF THEM.”

This cannot be understood of his corporeal presence: for, as to this he said, “I am no more in the world;” and no more will he be in the world, as to his bodily presence, “till he shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” It is also to be distinguished from his essential presence; for by this he is everywhere, and fills heaven and earth. Whenever his presence is spoken of in a way of promise, it intends not the perfection of his nature, but a privilege. Thus, though he is not far from any one of us, yet it is said, “The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.” It is of such a peculiar and gracious presence he here speaks.

And thus he is with all his people. He is with

them in their own persons; with them in the closet; with them in the family—But “the Lord loveth the gates of Zion better than all the dwellings of Jacob.”

It is observable, that he does not say what he will *do* there, but only that he *is* there, in the midst of them. This is assurance enough. His presence is all his people can need; for with him is the fountain of life. Moses desired nothing more than that his presence should go with him. David was emboldened by this to look into the valley of the shadow of death—“I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.” What is heaven? To “be for ever with the Lord.”

Well, when they are gathered together in his Name, there he is in the midst of them, as a physician in the midst of his disordered patients; as a father in the midst of his family; as the sun is in the midst of the garden in spring; as the soul is in the body, animating every member, and penetrating every particle of the frame. There he is, to enliven their devotions, to hear their complaints, to relieve their wants, to give them grace and glory and to withhold no good thing from them. There he is, to pardon the guilty, to enrich the poor, to comfort the mourners, to be the father of the fatherless, and the judge of the widow in his holy habitation.

Christians! you are his witnesses. This assurance you have often tried; and it has now become a matter of history and experience. There he gave you these eyes to see, and ears to hear, and hearts to feel. You know the preacher could not have made you “a new creature”—“the excellency of the power was of God”—“God was in the midst of them of a truth.” There you have found him in painful discoveries, which laid open the chambers of imagery in the heart; and made you cry, “Behold, I am vile;” “wherefore I abhor

myself, and repent in dust and ashes." There you have enjoyed him in the manifestations of his love; and have been convinced that they were not the delusions of fancy, or the ferments of animal nature, by their humbling, holy, heavenly results. There he has removed your perplexities and doubts; freed your conscience of its galling load; and spoken many a word in season to your weary souls: so that you can now say,

"In every new distress,  
We'll to his house repair;  
We'll think upon his wondrous grace,  
And seek deliverance there."

And go—always pleading this promise, and saying, "Do as thou hast said:" "Fulfil thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." That hope will not, cannot make you ashamed. Your expectation is sustained not only by his goodness, but also by his truth. *You* could not have bound him, but *he* has bound himself. He *cannot* be absent from your assembly if you meet in his Name—For he hath said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, THERE AM I IN THE MIDST OF THEM."

## JUNE 25.—MORNING.

"Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them." MATT. xviii. 20.

LET me take this blessed assurance, and consider it As a demonstration of my Saviour's divinity. Who less than God could have given such a promise? He does not say, there shall my blessing be, but myself: there *will* I be, but there I *am*. This necessarily sup-



poses omnipresence. How else could he be in so many companies and places at once? How many assemblies are there on the Sabbath in the various parts of the earth! And, if there be truth or meaning in this promise, he is in every one of them, attending to all the peculiarities of individual condition, and affording the most suitable relief. Could an angel do this? But

Let me consider it as a standard by which to estimate his condescension and grace. Here I find David before me—"When," says he, "I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?" So felt also his son Solomon at the dedication of the temple. It was a glorious scene; and a common mind would have been struck with the splendor of the building, the largeness of the audience, and the sound of such a multitude of performers: but he, wondering that the Supreme Being should deign to notice it, exclaims, "Will God in very deed dwell with men upon the earth? Behold, the heaven, even the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee: how much less this house which I have built!" See, O my soul, he not only allows us to wait upon him, but he waits upon us! Small as our number may be, wherever we meet together he is in the midst of us—however poor and unworthy—and as often as they choose to assemble! And he has been always doing this—and will continue to do it to the end of time! "Who is a God like unto thee?"

Let it serve to bind me to a proper demeanour in his house. There is always something impressive in a company of human beings, especially if there be in



the midst of them some very distinguished personage, such as a hero, a philosopher, a king. "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." In his presence let me guard against a roving eye; wandering thoughts; drowsiness; hypocrisy; formality. When I enter the sanctuary, I place myself immediately under his view—and he sees me, and knows whether my devotion be any thing more than a form of godliness or a fair show in the flesh.

Let it impress me with the importance of social and public worship. Some ask, "May we not read and pray and meditate at home? And will not this equally answer the purpose with our joining in the service of the sanctuary?" But the judge of all has decided this, not only by his command that we forsake not the assembling of ourselves together, but by his promise that he is in the midst of us. Indeed reason and experience will lead us to the same result. In his house, the greater number of the Lord's followers are called by grace; and they who are not born, are nourished there. It is thus excitement and allurements are provided, to draw the ignorant and the careless together. Nothing tends so much to civilize and harmonize men as their frequently uniting in such exercises; and nothing tends so much to keep the distinctions of life from excess and abuse.

Let it also prove a stimulation to the use of the means of grace. Some think it is needless for them to go to the sanctuary, because the minister can tell them no more than they know already. This is very questionable. But allowing that the servant is unable to do any thing more for them, is the Master too? I do not go only or principally because the

preacher is there ; but because the Saviour himself is there, whose sufficiency is divine. How is the company of the great courted ! If the Lord Jesus was now on earth, should I not, if I had an opportunity, repair to him ; and deem it a privilege to see him, hear him, and hold converse with him ? But I know where he now is, waiting to be gracious, and exalted to have mercy ; and I have full and easy access to him. Let me then suffer nothing to keep me from the assembly of his saints. Let not the creature prevent my serving and enjoying God. If I had an engagement with the king, should I not deem it even an honour to be able to allege such a reason for my refusing a person who called at the appointed hour ? If I am indifferent to the Lord's gracious promise on earth, what right have I to expect his glorious presence in heaven ? But if I now love the habitation of his house, and the place where his honour dwelleth at death I shall only remove to his temple above, where I shall worship him, not with a few, but with the general assembly ; not with infirmities which make me groan, being burdened, but with powers equal to the service ; not with long intervals between, and the return of worldly care and vexations, but to be still praising him.

## JUNE 25.—EVENING.

“He departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house ; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.” Acts xviii. 7, 8.

THIS was at Corinth. Here he continued a year and six months, assured that the Lord had much

people in that city. At first he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews. But, upon their opposing and rejecting him, he sought another place to teach in. It was not a building appropriated to public worship. At this time, and long after this, the Christians had no such edifices. They assembled wherever they could find an accommodation. The spot was indeed consecrated—not by a religious ceremony—but by the presence of God, and the service itself. The Saviour himself attached no holiness to walls or ground: but said, *Where*—let it be where it will—two or three are gathered together in my Name, *there* am I in the midst of them. He preached not only in the Temple, and in the synagogue, but in the private dwelling, and by the way-side, and in the mountain, and on board a ship. And his apostles followed his example; and *every* where lifted up holy hands without wrath and doubting.

The house Paul now entered belonged to a worshipper of God whose name was Justus: and it joined hard to the synagogue. The nearer the church, the proverb is, the farther from God. This is founded on the observation, that what men can easily reach and enjoy, they often neglect. And who are they that come late to the sanctuary? Not those from a distance; but they who live near. Who are absent in bad weather? Those who have carriages, or can procure vehicles; not they who come on foot. Who most frequently excuse their non-attendance? The strong and healthful; not the indisposed and weak. Who sleep during the service? Not the poor and laborious, who have seldom an hour of repose—but the lazy and genteel, who never know what fatigue means.

It was a trial of principle in this man to open his house to Paul. It would create him inconvenience, and trouble, and expense; and it would draw upon him danger and reproach; as it was an open avowal of his adherence to the cause; and he knew that the sect was everywhere spoken against. How many professors of religion, yielding to their selfish and dastardly reasonings, would have refused! They would have said, What will people think of me? What will my relations say? And may not my business suffer? We are never prepared for a course of godliness till we can give up every thing to God, especially our paltry reputation, as well as our worldly profit. Bunyan, with as much truth as genius, places all the pilgrims under the conduct of Mr. Great-Heart. It is, to intimate that we shall need courage every step of the way to the Shining City. Let us consult not with flesh and blood, but only with conviction; and go forth to the Saviour without the camp, bearing his reproach. We shall then not only retain peace of mind, but please him whose loving-kindness is better than life. Did Obed-edom repent of taking in the ark? The Lord blessed his house, and all that pertained to him. Who was ever a loser by any thing he did for the cause of God? Who *can* be a loser while *He* remains true who has said, Them that honour me I will honour. They shall prosper that love Zion?

What Justus did, in accommodating Paul, rewarded and dignified him; and it is now told for a memorial of him. How must it have delighted him to see the good that was done under his own roof! There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. But here is a man of some



rank and influence, Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believes—nor is this all. His *house* too is added to the Lord! Yea, and *many* of the Corinthians, hearing, believe, and are baptized!

Yet Paul baptized but few of them. And when he wrote his epistle to these people, he rejoiced in the fact. This has puzzled those who look upon the dispensation of the sacraments, so called, as by far the most honourable and sacred part of the ministerial function. And in all our churches persons are allowed to preach before they are *authorized* to administer what are called divine ordinances. And many reasons have been alleged to account consistently with this, for Paul's conduct in thanking God, that in all the time he staid here, and notwithstanding the multitude of converts, he had only baptized Crispus and Gaius, and the household of Stephanus. But the reason he himself assigns overturns an unscriptural notion and practice—He had devolved upon others the baptism of the new converts, because, says he, Jesus Christ sent me not to baptize—which outward form could be dispensed by others of inferior station and talent: but—which is by far the most important and difficult part of my office—to preach the Gospel.

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## JUNE 26.—MORNING.

“The ark of the Covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting-place for them.”

NUMB. x. 33.

THAT is, the *Lord* did this. But the Ark was the symbol of his presence, and the seat of his residence; from which, by the cloud, he regulated all their



movements. Yet the expression is still metaphorical; and we must not suffer the condescension of his language to injure the glory of his perfections. He feels no perplexity. He never deliberates; never examines; never searches: for there is nothing that is not manifest in his sight. But as men do this, and must do this, if they would avoid mistakes, and decide and act judiciously; the Lord thus intimates—that his wisdom was concerned in all their journeyings; and that his people may keep their minds in perfect peace, being stayed on him—for, as strangers and pilgrims on the earth, he careth for them—they are under his guidance—nothing befalls them by chance. All their removals, and their rests; all their situations, their trials, their comforts; are chosen for them by the only wise God their Saviour, who is always on the *look-out* for them—"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards him."

He not only leads his people in the way that they should go, but is concerned to afford them *repose*, as well as direction. Thus, in his promise to Moses, he said, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." Thus, in the review of his goodness, he says to Jeremiah, "The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness, even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest."

Thus here he searched out for them a resting-place—in their journey and—*after* it. To the former Moses refers, when he says, "The Lord your God went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents in"—before they were required to lay them entirely aside. Thus, before they reached Canaan, he

led them into many resting-places: in some of which they continued only days; in some, weeks; in some, months; and in a few, even years. It was a fine resting-place when they came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and threescore and ten palm-trees—But this was at the beginning of their journey, and designed to encourage them. They could not look for many stations like this. Each, however, which they successively occupied was of the Lord's selecting.

We may apply this to the temporal residences of Christians. How moveable have some of them been! But *He* has led them from one situation to another: and it should be satisfying for them to think—that he could find a better resting-place for them than they could have chosen for themselves, for he perfectly knows both the place and the persons. Sometimes the lines fall to them in agreeable scenes; and he kindly exceeds their hopes. In other cases, the abode is less inviting, and even trying. But they must acquiesce, without murmuring or complaining, in their Conductor's disposal—conscious that they are not worthy of the least of all his mercies; and remembering that they are not yet come unto "*the* rest and inheritance which the Lord giveth them."

It will apply also to their spiritual peace and refreshment in their travels. "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." There are spiritual resting-places on this side of heaven. In their acquaintance with his throne, his house, his day, his word, the covenant of peace—here he affords them the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Here he maketh his flock

to rest at noon. Here they lie down in green pastures, and are fed beside the still waters.

But the principal resting-place he sought out for them was at their journey's end. It was Canaan—"In the day I lifted up mine hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt into a land that I *had espied for them*, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands."

Yet there is a better country. And this, Christian, He is looking out for you! Whatever you now enjoy, your repose is imperfect and interrupted. Something, aloud or in whisper, says, Arise, and depart hence; for this is not your rest.

But there remaineth a rest for the people of God. A rest from all toil and temptation. From all sorrow and sin. A rest not only *in* God, but a rest *with* him.

"O glorious hour! O bless'd abode!  
I shall be near and like my God:  
And flesh and sin no more control  
The sacred pleasures of my soul."

JUNE 26.—EVENING.

"Upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?" JOHN IV. 27.

THAT is, immediately upon the conversation, and just as he had said unto her, I that speak unto thee am the Messiah.

Thus their return broke off the conference; and the woman was probably grieved to see the disciples so near at hand. Our most interesting interviews in this world are often and soon interrupted. It is sweet to hold converse with our fellow-Christians and with

ministers; and it is far sweeter still to hold communion with the Saviour. There are moments in the sanctuary and the closet, when we can say,

“ While such a scene of sacred joys  
Our raptur'd eyes and souls employs,  
Here we could sit, and gaze away  
A long, an everlasting day.”

But not only our sinful distractions, but our lawful connexions and businesses, and cares, invade and disperse our enjoyments; and make us long after a state where these interruptions will be no more. Now we have visions, or at best but visits—then we shall be for ever with the Lord.

The disciples were astonished—and the cause of their marvelling was, that “he talked with the woman.” Had they an apprehension that she was a woman of ill character? And, like the Pharisees, did they suppose that it was incompatible with the sanctity of the Messiah to hold any intercourse with persons of infamous reputation? This is not probable. She was a stranger to them. Our Lord indeed knew her; but it was by his divine prerogative; and as yet he had no opportunity to speak of her to his disciples.

It is more likely that their wonder arose from seeing him in close and friendly conversation with a woman of Samaria; for the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. The rancour excluded even the common civilities of life. At present the disciples seemed not aware of their Lord's design to extend favour to the Gentiles; and were but little acquainted with the nature of his kingdom—“where there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female; for we are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Again. Women have not always been properly regarded. If they contribute to their own degradation, they must blame themselves. It has often been asked, why the conversation of even wise men is, with women, always vain and trifling? We do not entirely admit the fact. If, however, there be truth in the supposition, the cause is to be found in females themselves—they must be pleased with such discourse: for men will naturally accommodate themselves to their taste; and it is their interest to do so. Let women rise and vindicate their sex—many are now doing so: let them shew that they consider themselves, and wish to be considered, as rational, as well as animal, creatures; and as companions, as well as playthings and toys, and articles of sense and dress. But at this period the sex were treated, and are so still in the East, as beings much inferior to men. Now the disciples knowing that Jesus never trifled in conversation, but always spoke superiorly and divinely, were amazed to find him discoursing on deep and important subjects with a poor menial woman, judged incapable of understanding them.

The meanness of the persons to whom he manifested himself always scandalized flesh and blood. Have, it was asked, any of the rulers believed on him? But this people, who know not the Law, are cursed. Yet it was his *glory* that the poor had the Gospel preached unto them; and that the common people heard him gladly. When he rejoiced in spirit, he said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes. And his Apostle follows in the same strain: "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the



understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence."

But we here see the diffidence and submission of the disciples—"Yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?" Confidence in his greatness and rectitude awed them into silence. Whence we recommend two things. First, let us observe the words of Solomon: "If thou hast *thought* evil, lay thine hand upon thy *mouth*." A good man should make conscience of the state of his mind, as well as of his speech: but what we cannot always prevent in thought we may restrain in expression. Words are worse than thoughts: they add to them; they shew more of the dominion of evil; they are more injurious to others; and betray ourselves more into difficulties. In a multitude of words there wanteth not sin. Therefore let us resolve to take heed to our ways, that we sin not with our tongue. David prayed, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips."

Secondly, as the reverence of the disciples induced them not to question the propriety of our Lord's conduct—though for the present they could not understand it—so should we act towards him. He is not bound to give account of any of his matters; and he often requires us to walk by faith, and not by sight.

But we know that his work is perfect; his ways are judgment. Let us never charge him foolishly, but acquiesce in the most mysterious of his dispensations; assured that he has reasons for them which at present satisfy him, and will satisfy us when they are finished and explained. What we know not now, we shall know hereafter.—“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” “Just and true are all thy ways, O thou King of saints.”

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## JUNE 27.—MORNING.

“Thou hast been a shadow from the heat.” ISA. xxv. 4.

AND what he has been, he is, and will be—the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Heat means evil; any evil, every evil, from which it is desirable to be screened. Heaven is a state—and many have reached it—where the sun does not light on them, or any heat. But it is otherwise 'in this world. Here many things affect the mind, as oppressive heat does the body: and makes us pant for deliverance and repose. The wrath of God—a sense of his fiery Law in the conscience—the temptations of Satan—the persecutions of wicked and unreasonable men—afflictions, public and private, personal and relative—Here is the heat—

Where is the shadow? Behold me, says the Saviour of sinners; Behold me! Come unto me, and I will give you rest. *This* is the rest, says God, wherewith ye shall cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing.

But what kind of shadow is He? We read in the

Scripture—Of the shadow of a cloud—Of the shadow of a tree—Of the shadow of a rock—Of the shadow of a tabernacle from the heat. The shadow of a cloud in harvest is grateful, but transient. The shadow of a tree under which we sit down is delightful: but it is limited to a small distance; and the rays frequently pierce through the boughs. The shadow of a great rock is dense and cool: but it befriends not on every side, and covers little from the vertical rays. The shadow of a tabernacle, into which we may continually resort, and find not only room, but entertainment, is the most complete and inviting. All these have some truth in their application to him: but none of them can do justice to the subject. He is what they imply, but *more*; and not only more than each of them, but more than *all* of them; and more than all of them *combined*; and more than all of them combined in the *best* estate—and *infinitely* more. He is not only *perfect*, but *Divine*; and he that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under *the shadow of the Almighty*.

Let me leave, then, other shadows. They are all inadequate to the wants of the soul; and, in some way or other, will be sure to fail me—yea, whatever else I get under for shelter will not only prove vanity, but vexation of spirit.

But let me make use of this shadow from the heat. He is not far off. He is accessible. He is easy to approach. And it is only by repairing to him that I can enjoy the benefit derivable from him.

And, while believing, I rejoice in him with joy unspeakable, let me shew my benevolence, by recommending him to others. They also are strangers to repose. They also want rest unto their souls. And

he is sufficient to receive, and defend, and succour, and bless all. Oh happy period, when the eyes of men, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the Lord! And when in him all the families of the earth shall be blessed! The Lord hasten it in his time!

## JUNE 27.—EVENING.

“Singing.” EPHES. v. 19.

ALL believe that hearing is a duty, and that prayer is a duty. But some question whether this is the case with singing. Now there is something in our very structure that seems equal to a proof of the obligation. We cannot imagine a faculty was given us which was never intended to be used; especially a faculty from which so much pleasure and advantage can be derived and communicated. We are fearfully and wonderfully made; and this power of vocal music far surpasses all mechanical performance. No instrument, however surprising or perfect, can *express words*; but, in singing, man can *speak*; and inform while he delights. How shameful is it that such an unrivalled endowment should be perverted, or degraded to evil purposes! But we are not to argue against the use of a thing from the abuse of it. Let us remember that God is to be glorified in our body, as well as in our spirit. Let us say, with David, “Awake up, my glory: I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.”

Singing is not a ritual duty. It preceded the ceremonial law; and when our Saviour had abolished the passover, and his own supper had succeeded to it—“after supper he sang a hymn.” He thereby shewed



that such a service belonged to the new state which he had introduced, and was to be a part of *Christian* worship. Accordingly the sanction of his example, which had the authority of a command, was not disregarded by his disciples, either in practice or precept. Thus the Apostles at Philippi not only prayed, but sang praises in the prison, so that the prisoners heard them. And Paul says to the Ephesians; "Speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." And James adds, "Is any merry? let him sing psalms."

How should singing be performed? Sometimes when we are alone. David had his "songs in the night:" the solitary effusions of pious excitement. In the Life of Joseph Alleine we find that he always sung in his closet devotion, and which in the morning was never later than five o'clock.

It should prevail where it can be established in family worship. He does well, says Henry, who with his house prays night and morning; he does better who prays and reads the Scriptures; but he does best who prays, and reads, and sings too. I fear this holy custom of our forefathers has been for a long time on the decline. The observance of it would tend much to exclude dulness and formality; and be far more interesting to servants and children than long reading and lengthened prayer. This should be done at least on the Sabbath. An old author tells us he remembered the time when in numberless houses, at certain hours on the Lord's day, singing might be heard as you passed, from one end of London to the other. The ninety-second Psalm is called "a Song for the Sabbath day;" and, says David, "It is a good thing



to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy Name, O Most High: to shew forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night;" he here means, peculiarly every Sabbath day morning and night.

But when we enter the courts of the Lord, and engage in public worship, the command lays hold of us, "Serve the Lord with gladness; and come before his presence with singing." Here the singing should be congregational. For this purpose few things should be introduced which the people cannot *soon* join in. Hence also persons should *learn* to sing, at least *decently* that when they join they may aid and not injure—The singing in family worship would be a preparative for public devotion. What can be said for those who are well able to help, and yet seldom or never lift up their voice in this divine exercise, from sloth, fastidiousness, or pride? Who introduced the mode of sitting we know not; but surely it does not appear the most desirable one; and though the posture is not essential to the spirituality of our worship, we should be governed, even in the outward acts, by what is most preferable, by being most suitable, and becoming, and useful, and scriptural. How often do we read of the people standing up to praise the Lord! What should we think to see the choir sitting while they perform? And what can the choir think, when they see us sitting during the psalmody—but that we have nothing to do with it—unless as an entertainment from them?

But what is to be said in recommendation of this duty? It is a very instructive ordinance. How many important truths are we mutually informed or reminded of by it, and which are also rendered peculiarly im-

pressive, by the pleasing manner in which they are again and again repeated!—Hence, says the Apostle, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

It is also a very enlivening exercise. Nothing is so adapted to excite holy affections. Let any one, in order to prove this, *read* only, and then *sing* the very same words; and what a difference will he feel in the effects of the two! Nothing tends so much to animate to courage and confidence; and therefore it has always been employed in warfare. On a similar principle, there never has been a revival of religion, in any country, or in any neighbourhood, but has been attended with a fondness for psalmody. Luther knew the force of it, and much and successfully encouraged it in the beginning and progress of the Reformation in Germany.

It is the most social ordinance. In preaching and prayer, one leads, and the rest silently join; but here all concur, and stimulate each other.

To which we may add, it is the most permanent of our religious engagements. Our other sacred employments will soon cease; but we shall be still praising Him. In heaven our harps will never be hung on the willows; our hearts will never be untuned. We shall perfectly and for ever sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. The work and the joy of heaven are more represented by this service than by any thing, and by every thing else.

## JUNE 28.—MORNING.

“What doest thou here, Elijah?” 1 KINGS xix. 13.

THE principle of this question was not ignorance. God well knew how, and why, he came there. But he would know from Elijah himself; and therefore asks him—that, being called upon to account for his conduct, he might be convinced of his folly, and be either speechless, or condemned out of his own mouth. We may view the inquiry three ways.

First, as an instance of God’s moral observation of his creatures. His eyes are upon the ways of man, and he pondereth all his goings. Nothing can screen us from this inspection. Elijah was in the wilderness, and alone; he had even left his servant behind him—but the eye of God followed him. And the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. And let us not imagine that he only looks after an extraordinary character, like Elijah. No one is too small and inconsiderable to be disregarded by him. Every human being is not only his creature, but his subject, and responsible to him. The meanest slave is great in the sight of God, as possessed of a soul, and destined for eternity. God has a right to know where we are, and what we are doing; and a much greater right than a father or a master has to know this, with regard to a child or a servant: for we are absolutely his. And he is interested in observing our conduct: interested as a judge, who is to pass sentence upon our actions; interested as a friend and benefactor, who would check us when we are going astray, or recall us when we have wandered. For,

Secondly, we may consider it as a reproof given to a good man. He ought not to have been here, hiding himself from his enemy, and begging that he might die; but should have been engaged in carrying on the cause of God in the reformation he had so nobly begun—He was therefore blamable. God does not cast him off; but he reprehends him. And as many as he loves he rebukes and chastens. And faithful are the wounds of this Friend.

And how does he administer this reproof? He had all the elements under his control: and he shewed Elijah what he *could* do: “And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind, an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake, a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire, a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave.” “And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said”—You cowardly deserter? You ungrateful, rebellious wretch? No: but—“What doest thou here, Elijah?” And this, “in a small still voice”—a kind of under tone, or whisper, as if no one should hear it beside. Here was no upbraiding; nothing to inflame passion: but a kind and calm appeal to reason. How forcible! and yet tender! It is thus his gentleness makes us great. It is thus he does not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. It is thus he calls upon us to be followers of him, as dear children. If a brother be overtaken in a fault, let us not employ the earth-

quake, the wind, and the fire; but the small still voice. Let us take him aside. Let us tell him his fault between him and us alone. Let us restore such an one in the spirit of meekness. Reproof should never be given in a passion. It is too much, says an old writer, to expect that a sick patient will take physic, not only when it is nauseous, but boiling hot. And we know who has said, "In meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves." "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

Thirdly, as a rule by which we may judge ourselves. Let us suppose that we heard God addressing us, as he did Elijah. How should we answer him? Could we say, I hope I am where Thou wouldst have me to be? and doing what Thou wouldst have me to do? He *does* thus inquire. And therefore it behoves us so to act as to be able to give a satisfactory account of our conduct.

Let us apply the question to our troubles. How came we in these difficulties? Have they befallen us in following after God? or have we drawn them upon ourselves by our folly and sin?

Let us apply it to our connexions. We are choosing associates—Are we walking with wise men, or are we the companions of fools? We are engaging ourselves for life—Are we marrying in the Lord, or unequally yoking ourselves with unbelievers? "What doest thou *here*, Elijah?"

Let us apply it to our recreations. Are they such as conduce to the health of the body? and accord with purity of mind? or are they amusements and dissipations which, if God should call us to account, would strike our consciences dumb?

Let us apply it to our stations. Are we abiding



with God in our own callings? or are we acting out of our proper sphere of duty? How many have injured, if not ruined, their usefulness and comfort, by improper removals, or striking their tent without the cloud!

Let us apply it to our religious services. We ought to have an aim in coming to his house. Happy they who, when they hear the inquiry, What doest thou here, Elijah? can say; Here I am—not from custom or curiosity, but to know what the Lord will speak; and to see his power and his glory as I have seen him in the sanctuary.

And let us remember, that a false answer will be more than useless. We often assign a reason very different from the true one, to an inquiring fellow-creature: and him we may deceive. But God is not mocked.

## JUNE 28.—EVENING.

“In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death.” 2 KINGS xx. 1.

SICKNESS is one of the common calamities of our nature, from the assailings of which we shall never be secure till we enter Immanuel's land. There “the inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick;” for sin, the cause of all our maladies, will be removed, and all the moral purposes for which Providence employs them will be accomplished. And with what bodies shall we come? Bodies no longer requiring the insensibilities of sleep; no longer feeling the cravings of animal appetite; no longer exposed to accidents; no longer susceptible of disease. How trying and humiliating the scene now: for an immortal spirit to stand and nurse a crazy fragment of flesh; to be tethered within a few

yards of space; to suspend its operations and enjoyments in obedience to a writhing foot, or an aching tooth; to view every thing through a dull and distracting medium, and approach God himself through the wretched medium of shattered nerves! Oh what will it be to have a body like the Saviour's own glorious body; a body far superior to the body of the earthly Adam in paradise; a body meet to be the companion of the soul—not a disgrace to the soul, but its ornament—not an incumbrance to the soul, but its helper; enlarging its sphere of action and enjoyment by relating it again to the material universe, to the new heaven, and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness!

Some have had little sickness. These should admire and bless the care that has secured to them so long the possession and indulgence of health. Yet let them remember the days of darkness, for they may be many; and let them sympathize with the sons and daughters of bodily affliction. How many are there at this moment drowning with dropsy, burning with fever, oppressed with asthma! Some are made to possess months of vanity, and have wearisome nights appointed unto them; others are chastened also with pain upon their bed, and the multitude of their bones with strong pain, so that their life abhorreth bread, and their soul dainty meat.

Hezekiah's sickness may be viewed three ways. First, in connexion with his age—He was between thirty and forty. He had reached the perfection of manhood; and was in the midst of life—but in the midst of life we are in death. Forty is as mortal as fourscore.

Secondly, in reference to his condition and rank.

He was a king and a mighty monarch. "I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the Most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes." The great and noble too often despise those who are below them. But are they not partakers of the same flesh and blood? subject to the same infirmities? inheritors of the same mortality? Are not they also hastening to the grave, where they will say to corruption, thou art my father, and to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister? We are prone to envy the great and the affluent. But does a man's life consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses? Can honour or titles terrify away, or bribe off any of the ills that flesh is heir to? Can they assuage the anguish of disease? Yea, are not the upper classes more liable to disorders, and less qualified to bear them?

Thirdly, with regard to his piety. For he was a good man, and the friend of God. So was Epaphroditus; yet was he sick nigh unto death. So was Lazarus; and therefore the sisters sent to him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. And his love is almighty. Why then does he not exempt the objects of it from every thing disagreeable and distressing? Surely, if by a mere volition *we* could ease the complaints of a beloved connexion, we should instantly do it. But his love is as wise as it is powerful. His ways and his thoughts are as much above ours as the heavens are higher than the earth. Say not therefore, If we belong to him, why are we thus afflicted? The correction results from the relation: what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? You are pruned because you are vines. You are put into the furnace because you are gold. He has designs to

answer by such dispensations which will more than justify them. He intends to wean you from the world; to make you witnesses for himself; to display in you the truth of his word, the power of his grace, the tenderness of his care. As one whom his mother comforteth, so, says he, will I comfort you. The mother disregards none of her offspring; but she arranges things with a peculiar view to her poor, weak, sickly infant. The knee; the bosom; the delicacy; the softest bed; the breathless movement, is for him. So has it been, as Scripture and experience have testified in all ages, with Christians: as their sufferings have abounded, their consolation has abounded also. Perhaps they are never so impressive as by their exercise and display of the passive graces; never glorify God so much as in the fires. For this they are concerned; and therefore, when they are led into the chamber of sickness, and laid on the bed of languishing, their fears are awakened lest they should dishonour their profession; and they pray to be examples of the reality, and excellency, and efficacy of their religious principles and resources. And he hears and answers them. He is with them in trouble. He enables them in patience to possess their souls. He fills them with all joy and peace in believing. They instruct, invite, and encourage others; while their own praise, wonder, and confidence, are excited; and they can sing,

“Bastards may escape the rod,  
Sunk in earthly vain delight;  
But a true-born child of God  
Must not—would not—if he might.”

## JUNE 29.—MORNING.

"Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city." ACTS xviii. 9, 10.

THE Lord is a very present help in trouble; and before his people *express* their apprehensions, he foresees them, and effectually provides against them.

It is obvious Paul was now depressed and discouraged. He had nature in him as well as grace. The Christian, and even the Apostle, did not destroy the man. He had genius; and not only a great sensibility, but a tinge of melancholy is perhaps inseparable from this endowment. He was also the subject of bodily enervation; and was now worn down, not only by constant preaching, but also by working manually day and night, to support himself and relieve others. In allusion to which he says, in his Letter to these Corinthians, "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." Yea, he was now, it would seem, afraid—of men—of suffering persecution—of death. Is this he that said, None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my course with joy? Yes. He then spoke sincerely, and according to the frame he was in. But what a change do we feel, if the Lord hides his face; or faith fails; yea, or if there be only a variation in the humours of the body, or the state of the weather!

The Lord therefore removes his fear by the assurance that no man should set upon him to hurt him; for "He was with him; and had much work for him to do"—so that even his destination secured him.



And see how faithfully and *remarkably* this was accomplished. For though the place was so abandoned, and he had so many enemies, he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them without any molestation. At length a storm arose, which tried his confidence in the promise. But it issued in the proof that the Saviour in whom he trusted was true and righteous altogether. For all the Jews in the city made a violent insurrection against Paul, and brought him before Gallio the deputy. But Gallio refused to take cognizance of the affair, and drove them from the judgment-seat. Upon which, provoked by his conduct, the Greeks, who had joined the Jews in this assault, fell upon *Sosthenes*, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in sight of the bench—but *Paul*, on whose account the persecution was raised, was suffered to escape uninjured, and continued his labours a considerable time longer, undisturbed, and at length withdrew from the place in peace!

—Is not this enough to prove that nothing is too hard for the Lord? that he can turn the shadow of death into the morning? that our enemies, however numerous and malignant, are all under his control? and cannot move a hair's breadth beyond the length of the chain in which he holds them?

Do we not here see, that if we have his promise we have enough to establish, strengthen, settle us, whatever our difficulties and dangers may be? Heaven and earth may pass away, but his word cannot fail. If a child, even in the dark, feels his father's hand grasping his, and hears him say, I am with thee, fear not; he is calmed and confident. Yea, says David, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of

death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me. He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee: so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. "Yea, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us."

## JUNE 29.—EVENING.

"Thou wilt recover me." ISAIAH xxxviii. 16.

AND he did so. This is not always the case. Sickness to some, yea to many, is the messenger, the forerunner, the beginning of death. And Hezekiah's sickness seems to have been in itself mortal, and would have issued in his speedy dissolution, but for the Divine interposition—he "was sick nigh unto death;" and the Lord said unto him, "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live." But he was the subject of recovering mercy. Five things are recorded in connexion with the event.

It was in answer to prayer. "Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, and said, Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore." One of the designs of affliction is to bring us to God; and by prayer we obtain support under it, and sanctification by it, and deliverance from it—"Call upon me in the day of trouble and I will deliver thee." And did any ever seek him in vain? Did Hezekiah? So far from it, and to shew how quickly prayer reaches God, and brings down the blessing, before Isaiah could get through the palace-yard the word of the Lord came

to him, saying, "Go and say to Hezekiah, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears." Thus he not only hears and answers prayer, but fulfils the word, "Ere they call I will answer, and while they speak I will hear."

The second circumstance was the definite prolongation of his life—"Behold I will add unto thy days fifteen years." This was a considerable re-prieve. Yet it was nothing more. For so long a time he was raised up; but he was left mortal. The sentence, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," was only suspended. Have any of you been recovered from the bed of sickness? Remember, you are dying creatures still; and *you* have no assurance of *your* life. *You* know not what a day, or an hour, may bring forth. The addition of fifteen years would not make Hezekiah an old man; and they would soon pass away like a dream. He is the only person who was previously informed how long he had to live. Doubtless he was concerned to improve the information; and would often say, "Well, there is another of the fifteen years gone, and the remainder is rapidly going—So teach me to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom." Yet it was awful for him to know the term of life. None of us would know it if it were in our power. It is better for our comfort to be ignorant; and it is better for our improvement. As the shade upon the dial is useful as well as the sunshine; so our ignorance may be rendered profitable—"Watch, for ye know not at what hour the Lord doth come."

The third circumstance is the important blessing that accompanied the announcement of his restoration. He was pressed by the Assyrian force, which had

entered the country, taking all the strongholds in the way, and was now besieging Jerusalem—What would fifteen years have been had he passed them in personal captivity, or in a subdued and degraded empire, or in a state of constant alarm or suspicion? But God perfects the mercy: “And I will deliver thee, and this city, out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city.” What would it be to lengthen out our existence, without our limbs, our senses, our reason, our relative comforts? But God giveth liberally. He giveth us richly all things to enjoy.

The fourth circumstance regards the supernatural confirmation of it—“And this shall be a sign unto thee from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing that he hath spoken; behold I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun-dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.” Why was this sign given? Was not the word of a faithful God sufficient? The Lord does nothing in vain. He saw the state of Hezekiah’s mind: he knew that there was something ready to faint in his faith and hope: and therefore he passes by the infirmity, and indulges his wishes—for he had said, “What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord?” Thus he stoops, and accommodates himself to the imperfections of his people. He does not break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax. And shall we despise the day of small things?

The last circumstance is the employment of means—“For Isaiah had said, Let them take a lump of figs, and lay it for a plaister upon the boil, and he

shall recover." It is well known that figs have a virtue to ripen an imposthume, and bring it to a head, that the peccant matter may be removed. But in the case before us, from the nature and prevalency of the disease, no means would have availed without the peculiar agency of God. The fact therefore is very instructive. We see that *prayer* does not supersede the use of means. We also see that the *Divine assurance* does not supersede the use of them: for no sooner has Isaiah promised his recovery as a prophet, than he prescribes for him as a physician. Yea, the very *miraculousness* of the cure does not supersede the use of them. Miracles were never a waste of power; never intended to make people wonder only, or to save them the trouble of doing what they are able to do for themselves. Miracles therefore were never needlessly multiplied; and even when they have been performed there was nothing in the *degree* of them that was unnecessary or superfluous. The manna descended from the clouds; but the people were to gather it. The angel opened the prison door, and released Peter from his fetters;—this he could not do himself; but he did not take him up in his arms, and carry him to the house of Mary; but said unto him, Follow me; for he had legs and feet, and why should he not employ them? It is a great thing to unite activity and dependence; to use means, and not neglect to trust in God; and to trust in God, and not neglect to use means. "I lead," says Wisdom, "in the midst of the paths of judgment."



## JUNE 30.—MORNING.

“The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered from his sickness. ISAIAH xxxviii. 9.

MANY persons are afraid of their trials. It would be wiser to fear their mercies. They are in more danger from their friends than from their enemies; from their comforts than from their crosses; from their health than from their sickness. They often desire our prayers when they come into affliction; but they need them most when they are coming out of it; and are returning into scenes of danger and temptation again.

Wicked and worldly men are only anxious to escape from their troubles. But it ought to be our concern to inquire whether we “come forth as gold”—whether we are brought nearer to God, or are left farther from him by the things we suffer. Constantine the Great said, “I marvel that many of my subjects, since they became Christians, are worse than they were when they were Pagans.” Young speaks of some as “worse for mending,” and “washed to fouler stains.” And it is lamentable to think how many, instead of being improved by their recovery from disease, are injured by it. They poured out a prayer when God’s chastening hand was upon them, and confessed and resolved, and vowed unto the Lord; but when he relieved and released them, they turned again to folly. Many think we are severe in our reflections on death-bed changes; and wonder that we think such conversions can never be entirely satisfactory to the subjects of them, or their surviving friends. Yet of how many ministers have we in-

quired, all of whom have affirmed, that they never knew such converts, when recovered, living according to their promises; yet had they died, they would have entertained a firm hope concerning many of them! And it is probable funeral sermons would have been preached for some of them—and how would others have been chronicled in the magazines! Even Jacob forgot the vow his soul made when he was in trouble, till God said unto him, “Arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.” Then, and not before, did the backslider say, “Let us arise and go up to Beth-el; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way in which I went.”

Hezekiah did better upon his recovery. He wrote a song, and had it sung in the temple-service. He might, indeed, for this purpose, have availed himself of one of David's songs; and we read that he appointed persons to sing the songs of his illustrious ancestor in the worship of God. But he composed one himself on this occasion, not from vanity, but from sentiments of piety. He wrote it in particular for three purposes.

First, to show the importance of the blessing he had experienced. Read his language, and you will find how much he valued life. This to some may seem strange. To a good man, is it not gain to die? When a voyager is entering the desired haven, is he so glad and grateful for a wind that blows him back again to sea? The fear of death is as much a natural principle as hunger or thirst. Every good man, though always in a state to die, is not in a frame to

die. He may not have the light of God's countenance, or the assurance of hope. He may be also influenced by relative considerations. This was the case with Hezekiah. He might have feared for the succession; for he had no offspring at this time: Manasseh was only twelve years old at his death, and therefore could not have been born till three years after his father's recovery. The enemy was also at the gates of the capital. He had also begun a glorious reformation, and wished to see it carried on. Even Paul, though he knew that to depart and to be with Christ was far better, yet was more than willing to abide in the flesh, for the advantage of the Philippians and others.

Secondly, to excite his gratitude. Hence he so vividly recalls all his painful and gloomy feelings in his late danger, that he might be the more affected with the goodness of his deliverer and benefactor. Read the whole chapter—Do as he did. Dwell upon every thing that can give a relish, and add an impression to the blessing you have received; and be ye thankful—and employ your tongues, your pens, your lives, in praise of the God of your mercies. Did the heathen upon their recovery hang up tablets of acknowledgments in the house of their gods? Have Papists built churches and altars to their patron-saints? And will you do nothing for the Lord your healer? Yet so it often is! The physician is cheerfully rewarded; the attendants are paid for their trouble; friends are thanked for their obliging inquiries—only one Being is overlooked—*He* who gave the physician his skill; *He* who rendered the means effectual; *He* who inspired the inquiring friends with all their tenderness.

Thirdly, to insure a sense of his obligation in future. The Jews soon forgot the works of the Lord, and the wonders which he had shewn them. We are very liable to the same evil. But we should say, with David, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and *forget* not all his benefits;" and avail ourselves of every assistance that can enable us to recover and preserve the feelings we had at the time when the Lord appeared for us. Thus the Jews established the feast of Purim upon their deliverance from the plot of Haman. Thus Samuel raised a stone after his victory, and called it Ebenezer. Joseph named his sons Ephraim and Manasseh, to remind him of the contrast between his former and present condition. And thus Hezekiah would compose this writing, that he might compare himself with its sentiments, months and years after; and that it might be a pledge of his dedication to God, and a witness against him if his love should ever wax cold—

And how was it with him? Can I proceed? So far all is well. He is wise, humble, grateful, resolved. But, alas! how shall we say it? "*After* this Hezekiah rendered not according to the benefit done him; for his heart was lifted up; therefore wrath came upon him and upon all Judah." Lord, what is man! Who is beyond the danger of falling while in this world? On what can we safely rely? He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool. And he is not much better that trusts in his own grace. It is not *our* grace, but *his* grace that is sufficient for us. Let us therefore be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Let us not insult over others when they err in doctrine or in practice; but tremble for ourselves, and pray, Lord, hold thou me up, and I shall be safe. Blessed is the man that feareth always.



## JUNE 30.—EVENING.

“There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God.” Ps. xlv. 4.

WHAT can this “river” be, but that blessed covenant to which David himself repaired in the time of trouble, and extolled beyond every other resource or delight—Although my house be not so with God; yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation and all my desire, although he make it not to grow?

And what are “the streams” of this river, but the outgoings and effects of this divine constitution—The blood of Jesus—The influences of the Holy Spirit—The doctrines and promises of the Gospel—The ordinances of religion—And all the means of grace?

There are four ways in which the streams of a river would gladden the citizens. They will all apply in a pre-eminent degree to the case before us.

The first regards *prospect*. Nothing can be more pleasing or interesting to those who relish the simple beauties of nature, than to walk by the side of living streams; to see the fish playing and disappearing; the green weeds waving their long streamers in the water; the reeds bending and recovering themselves again; the rippling of the shallows; and the glassy reflections of the deeps; while the bushes and trees form a quivering shade on the banks. Here is enough to fix the tasteful mind; and to induce the poet to take out his pen, and the painter his pencil. What views have Christians by the side of their streams!



How various! How endearing! How impressive the objects which strike and occupy their minds! "My meditation of him shall be sweet; I will rejoice in the Lord."

The second regards *traffic*. It is an unspeakable advantage to a place to be accessible by water, as it renders commerce not only practicable, but easy and extensive. The Humber was the making of Hull. The Thames has rendered London so famous. Were this stream dried up, or diverted, how would the mistress of the nations be humbled and reduced! It is owing to their trade carried on by the means of their rivers, that many cities on the Continent have united themselves to the ends of the earth, and acquired such distinction and wealth. And by these streams Christians obtain riches for the soul and eternity: unsearchable riches; durable riches, with righteousness. It is by these they carry on business with the land that is very far off, the merchandise of which is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

The third regards *fertility*. Imagine a dry and barren land where no water is, and think what happiness would ensue if springs gushed forth from the sands, and meandered through meadows with grass, and reeds, and rushes. Lot chose the plain country, the vale of Sodom, near Jordan, because it was well watered, like the garden of the Lord. Did you never read the words of Balaam in describing the blessedness of Israel? "As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters." What is a tree planted by the rivers of waters, bringing forth fruit in its season,

and with never-withering leaves, but a Christian by these streams, growing in the divine life; adorned with the graces of the Spirit; and filled with all the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the praise and glory of God?

The fourth regards *supply*. What could a city do without this precious, all-important fluid? An enemy, therefore, always endeavours to cut off the water, to compel a place the more suddenly and speedily to surrender. Hence the boast of Rab-shakeh; "With the sole of my foot I have dried up all the rivers of the besieged places." This shall never be the case here. Your resources can never fail. Your relief can never be cut off. You have always access to the God of all grace. And how superior are your supplies! How free! How full! How satisfying! "Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Are you asking, Who will shew us any good? Let the subject supply an answer. Oh, there is—there *is* a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God. Forsake the foolish, and live, and go in the way of understanding. Leave the world, and enter the Church. There—how unlike creatures, who are all vanity and vexation of spirit—There you will find a Saviour full of grace and truth. Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee.

O my soul, am I the subject of this happiness? Let me give proof of it. Let me be a witness for

God. Let me exemplify his word. Let me convince others that there is—a reality—an excellency—a blessedness in the religion of Jesus that can set the heart at rest, and yield a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

The pleasures of which we have been speaking are the pleasures of the way. What will be those of the end!

“If such the sweetness of the *streams*,  
What must the fountain be,  
Where saints and angels draw their bliss  
Immediately from thee!”

END OF VOL. II.

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